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TURGENEV'S GHOSTLY TALES

BY



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Turgenev's Ghostly Tales," submitted by Glenna Macdonald in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev wrote many ghostly tales during the course of his literary career. On the whole, they have been overlooked by both the Russian and the Western critics who have generally concentrated upon his major works--A Sportsman's Sketches, Rudin, A Nobleman's Nest, On the Eve, Fathers and Sons, Smoke, and Virgin Soil--for their political and social import. The ghostly tales, when set in that framework, suffer from much misinterpretation and depreciation.

This thesis aims at examining Turgenev's supernatural stories in a philosophical light. By discussing Turgenev's attitude towards realism, mysticism, and positivism; by analyzing several ghostly tales published between 1852 and 1882; by considering Turgenev's melancholy temperament, his fascination for Arthur Schopenhauer, and his affinity with Henry James; this thesis strives to present an objective study of Turgenev's view on reality.

Shunning the fashion for "contemporaneity," established by his greatest critic, the Russian public, Turgenev quietly investigated all aspects of reality under the auspices of positivism. Its tenets did not force him to become either a materialist or an idealist. He could examine the irrational elements in the rational without abandoning his objectivity. Influenced by Gogol's accurate portrayal of man in his surroundings, Turgenev, however, did not commit himself like his predecessor or his contemporaries, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, to any mystical orthodoxies. Turgenev intended to maintain his freedom of outlook so essential in pur-

suing the truth, and he continually reminded his readers of his indifference to mysticism per se. To avoid any connection with such a doctrine, he even went so far as to publicly assert that his ghostly tales, which, in fact, formed the serious core of his investigation of reality, should be considered as mere trifles and amusements.

Turgenev never answered the riddle of life. Though his personal experiences, his correspondence, his later ghostly tales, and his attraction to Schopenhauer indicate a pessimistic viewpoint, they indicate at the same time an almost optimistic outlook about man's final fate. Turgenev's aspirations for understanding the unknown in life link him with mysticism, though positivism prevented him from completely opening the door of revelation and discovering absolute truth.

FOREWORD

Turgenev wrote many supernatural stories, particularly during the approximate ten year lapse between the publication of his novels, On the Eve (1860), and Smoke (1867). Those mysterious tales puzzled both the Russian critics and readers, who were accustomed to evaluating literature on the basis of its political and social content.

That method of literary criticism developed in Russia during the 1820's when Polevoy and Nadezhdin began to attack the elegant and aristocratic creativity of the Golden Age. They proposed that all writing should embody more ideology and national consciousness. Their theory evolved from the rise of a middle-class reading public and the trend towards works of prose rather than of poetry. During the 1840's, Belinsky, Russia's most influential critic of the past century, continued to develop that system. He strongly felt that literature should portray life realistically or truthfully and advocate both national consciousness and liberal ideas. His standards became those of the "civic" critics in the 1860's. However, men, such as Chernyshevsky, Dobrolubov, and Pisarev, carried Belinsky's theory to the extreme. They insisted that political, social, and economic problems take priority over other literary topics. Aesthetic qualities were secondary or unimportant. The controls of the official censorship were unable to still the voices of the radical critics, who greatly influenced the opinions of the reading public. Even the more conservative writers like Turgenev tried to compromise their demands. The civic critics generally held the chief posts on the staff of the literary journals and, thus, could almost

dictate their terms to any writer who wished to publish his works. Turgenev eventually refused to submit his stories to the Contemporary, and his relationship with Nekrasov deteriorated. Turgenev also disliked Chernyshevsky, who postulated in his book, The Aesthetic Relationship of Art to Reality, that art was a surrogate of life and only suitable for immature people. That viewpoint in Turgenev's opinion was sheer nonsense. He himself stressed the necessity of art to be art, and he hoped that in all honesty he would call himself an artist. Turgenev's supernatural stories are clear evidence of what the author thought about the relationship of art to reality. Their poetic and imaginative quality simply intensify the impression of life itself. But Turgenev seemed to be fighting a losing battle. Dobrolubov, who took over Chernyshevsky's post as chief critic of the Contemporary, continued to disseminate the theory of materialistic aesthetics. At the same time, Pisarev, the leader of "Turgenev's nihilists," harshly criticised artistic literature and poetry. He carried Chernyshevsky's utilitarianism to the extreme. According to him, social consciousness should be the predominant theme of all writing. Consequently, Pisarev greeted Turgenev's Fathers and Sons with enthusiasm since, in the critic's opinion, the novel portrayed the literary prototype of the new man--sensible, scientific, rational--in the person of Bazarov. However, Turgenev writing to Anna Filosofov in 1874 exclaimed that he had never paid any attention to the critics' chatter about the fashion for politics in literature and that he did not intend to listen to them.

Turgenev was not alone in his wish to depict reality in a purely artistic manner. By the mid-nineteenth century a small group of critics arose, who opposed the "civic" principle. Men such as Annenkov and Druzhinin advocated, instead, the principle of art for art's sake. Though their work

was highly praiseworthy and original, it did not really influence the literary taste of the reading public. Turgenev, nevertheless, frequently corresponded with the two men and, on the whole, agreed with their theory.

Yet, the civic tendency in Russian literary criticism has persisted till the present day. Soviet critics find that Turgenev's ghostly tales pose just as perplexing a problem to them as to the nineteenth century critics. These mysterious stories do not seem to fit into the political and social framework of evaluation as easily as his novels except, perhaps, for A Sportsman's Sketches but even then the main theme is the artistic and the objective portrayal of life. As yet, there seems to be very few contemporary analyses of Turgenev's supernatural studies. N. V. Bogoslovskii, in his biography on Turgenev, briefly mentions the presence of the fantastical elements but considers them only incidental to the real life episode of Clara Milich, for instance, and the psychological character of The Song of Triumphant Love. G. A. Bialy, however, discusses some of the ghostly tales at greater length in his book, Turgenev i russkii realizm. He suggests that the creation of the "mysterious stories" resulted from the revival of mysticism in the nineteenth century, which may be attributed to the borderline position positivism took between the known and the unknown phenomena. Bialy particularly explores the submission of the will to the powers of hypnotism and magnetism active in The Dream, The Dog, A Strange Story, The Song of Triumphant Love, and Clara Milich. But the critic discovers a rational explanation for each unusual episode and detects in each story themes on political, social, and national consciousness. Of great interest is the work by L. V. Pumpianskii, Turgenev i Zapad, published in N. L. Brodskii's I. S. Turgenev: Materialy i issledovaniia. Pumpianskii discusses the influence of the philosophical views of Hegel and Schopenhauer on Turgenev's

own thoughts, the literary relationships between Turgenev and Western writers such as Flaubert, Maupassant, and Poe; the preoccupation of Henry James with the novels and stories of Ivan Turgenev. I. A. Vinnikova pursues Pumpianskii's study on "schopenhauerism" in her book, I. S. Turgenev v shestidesiatye gody: Ocherki i nabliudeniia. The philosophical background of Turgenev's pessimism especially interests her but she restricts her investigations only to Phantoms and Enough.

Analyses of Turgenev's ghostly tales by Western critics are also scarce. David Magarshack in his biography on Turgenev briefly discusses the supernatural stories in connection with the writer's personal experiences. Avrahm Yarmolinsky treats the stories in a similar manner in his biography on Turgenev. Though Eugène Melchior de Vogüé tended to over-emphasize the predilection of the Russian realists for mysticism in comparison with the French, his book, The Russian Novel, helps to explain Turgenev's approach to the study of life. The American novelist and critic, Henry James, touches upon the ghostly tales in an essay on the Russian writer, published in French Poets and Novelists. James also dwelt on the subject of Turgenev's pessimism. More recently, Dorothy Scarborough has suggested in her book, The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction, that many of Turgenev's ghostly tales are similar in tone to those of some English writers like Reginald Hodder, Robert Browning, and Hamlin Garland. She comments upon his effective mingling of the supernatural in the natural, his psychic vampirism, his attraction for the Orient and for mystical romanticism. The essay by Edmund Wilson, "Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop," included in Magarshack's translation of Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments, extensively examines the forces of evil in the supernatural stories against the background of the author's private life

and experiences.

Nevertheless, in comparison with the amount of critical work done on Turgenev's novels, there seems to be very little as yet on the supernatural or mysterious stories. This thesis intends to develop those serious studies, already begun on Turgenev's ghostly tales, which provide marvelous material concerning his outlook on life. Perhaps they may even contribute to the future analyses of his well-known novels.

A Note on Transliteration

With the exception of the well-known names, which are spelled in accordance with the Oxford Dictionary, the rest of the Russian names, titles of stories, and expressions in this thesis are given in the transliteration system of the Library of Congress listed by D. S. Mirsky in his book, The History of Russian Literature. Because of technical difficulties, the diacritical marks have been omitted.

A List of the Original Russian Titles of Turgenev's
Ghostly Tales Given in English in
This Thesis

Russian	English
Zapiski Okhotnika	<u>A Sportsman's Sketches</u>
Bezhin lug	<u>Bezhin Lea</u>
Zhivye moshchi	<u>Living Relics</u>
Gamlet Shchigrovskogo uezda	<u>The Hamlet of Shchigrov District</u>
Chertopkhanov i Nedopiuskin	<u>Chertopkhanov and Nedopiuskin</u>
Konets Chertopkhanova	<u>The End of Chertopkhanov</u>
Faust	<u>Faust</u>
Sobaka	<u>The Dog</u>
Strannaia istoriia	<u>A Strange Story</u>
Stuk . . . stuk . . . stuk ! . .	<u>Knock, Knock, Knock</u>
Son	<u>The Dream</u>
Pesn'torzhestvuiushchei liubvi	<u>The Song of Triumphant Love</u>
Tri vstrechi	<u>Three Meetings</u>
Prizraki. Fantaziia.	<u>Phantoms</u>
Posle smerti (Klara Milich)	<u>Clara Milich</u>

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Turgenev often called himself a realist. Such an appellation seems to suggest that he would not ". . . trifle with the risky ingredients of the mysterious and the unknown."¹ Yet, "fully a third of his stories are concerned with the incursion of the supersensuous into everyday life."² What then prompted Turgenev, an avowed champion of reason, to compose ghostly tales, or, more precisely, supernatural stories?

Perhaps the childhood absorption of superstitious fears may partially explain Turgenev's predilection for the irrational. He never forgot all the fearful forebodings derived from dreams, visions, cards, and cabalistic numbers; nor all the worried whisperings about Trishka, the domovoi, the forest sprite, and the water nymph. Their life-long influence upon Turgenev may be illustrated by an incident which occurred at Courtevenal in 1849. According to David Magarshack, the Russian writer was once left alone in the home of the Viardots, when, at midnight, he heard "two deep sighs" near his face. Magarshack further related in his biography of Turgenev:

It gave him a slight 'horripilation'. As he walked through the passage he asked himself what he would have done if he had felt

¹Virginia Woolf, Collected Essays (4 vols.; London, 1966-67), I, 133.

²Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age (New York, 1959), p. 259.

a cold hand suddenly seizing one of his hands, and he had to confess that he would have uttered 'un cri d'aigle'.³

Thus Turgenev, in spite of his professed rationalism, seemed unable to free his imagination from his childhood connections with the supernatural, which delicately colours many of his stories.

A further explanation of Turgenev's ghostly motifs may lie in the author's method of probing the mystery of life. His approach differed considerably from that of his Russian contemporaries, though they all shared the legacy of Gogol's oft-discussed realism. One common postulation of this realism was presented by Petr Kropotkin, who stressed its incompatibility with the French school of realism. He wrote:

For us, realism could not be limited to a mere anatomy of society: it had to have a higher background; the realistic description had to be subservient to an idealistic aim. Still less could we understand realism as a description only of the lowest aspects of life, because to limit one's observations to the lowest aspects only, is not to be a realist. Real life has beside even within its lowest manifestations its highest ones as well. Degeneracy is not the sole nor dominant feature of modern society, if we look at it as a whole. Consequently, the artist who limits his observations to the lowest and most degenerate aspects only, and, if he does that for a special purpose, does not make us understand that he explores only one small corner of life--such an artist does not conceive life as it is: he knows but one aspect of it, and this is not the most interesting one.⁴

Kropotkin concluded by saying that Gogol showed his followers ". . . how realism can be put to the service of higher aims, without losing anything of its penetration or ceasing to be a true reproduction of life."⁵

From his predecessor, Turgenev learned to examine all facets of life in order to present a true picture of man in his surroundings. Hence,

³David Magarshack, Turgenev: A Life (London, 1954), p. 112.

⁴Petr Kropotkin, Russian Literature: Ideals and Realities (London, 1905), p. 90.

⁵Ibid., p. 91.

Turgenev's frightening fascination for the supernatural became an essential ingredient for the accurate investigation of reality.

Such an approach greatly attracted E. M. de Vogüé, a French literary critic, who asserted that his countrymen would do well to study the art of the Russian realists. He pointed out that the French realists utilized only the principle of scientific determinism in their stories and completely ignored the supernatural, or, simply, the inexplicable. In Vogüé's eyes, their realism was atheism. He admired the Russian writers because he thought they acknowledged the presence of an independent, invisible agent, pervading man's world. He declared that while Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky embraced various doctrines from abroad--the skeptical, the fatalist, or the positivist--they always remained fundamentally Christian.⁶ That fact, according to Vogüé, explained the empathy of the Russian writers:

They were not 'impassive' because, convinced of the existence of a Divine Guide and Judge, they showed themselves anxious about the moral state of their characters. They were not 'pitiless', because this anxiety forbade them to take malicious delight in watching the struggles and downfalls of the men and women they write about.⁷

But perhaps Vogüé's search for spiritual nourishment in literature too greatly biased his study of the Russian realists.

Though Turgenev wrote stories containing motifs of the other world, he never committed himself to the role of an interpreter. His constraint contrasted with the abandon of his contemporaries--Gogol, Dostoevsky, and

⁶Le Vicomte Eugène Melchior de Vogüé, The Russian Novel, trans. by Colonel H. A. Sawyer (11th ed.; New York, 1916), p. 18.

⁷Frederick W. J. Hemmings, The Russian Novel in France: 1884-1914 (London, 1950), p. 32.

Tolstoy--who ". . . struggled for religion, God, or morality" ⁸
 Gogol, in his Confessions, exclaimed that "I have followed life in its realities, not in dreams of imagination, and I have thus been able to find Him who is the Giver of Life." This overemphasis of one's own correct knowledge, which threads its way through the orthodoxies later embraced by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, tended, from Turgenev's point of view, to eradicate any freedom of outlook. In a letter to Fet, Turgenev criticised the Slavophile attitude of his contemporaries who asserted that "'everything is black here, but everything there is white'; 'the entire truth is on one side.'" ⁹

But we, [Turgenev continued] sinners that we are, suggest that a man just amuses himself by swinging the ax from the shoulder like that. However, it is of course easier that way, and then, once a man acknowledges that the truth is both here and there, that there is no sharp boundary to be drawn, he has to exert himself after he weighs both sides, etc. And that is boring. It is pleasanter to bark out things in military style. ¹⁰

In a letter to Borisov, Turgenev expressed his particular concern for Tolstoy's creative work. He feared that ". . . Slavophilism, into whose hands he [Tolstoy] seems to have fallen, may spoil his beautiful and poetic talent by depriving him of his freedom of outlook, as it has already spoiled . . . Kokhanovski and others." ¹¹ Turgenev forewarned that "an artist who loses the ability to see both black and white--and both to the right and left--is on the brink of destruction." ¹²

⁸Marc Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature: From Its Origin through Tolstoy (New York, 1950), p. 265. (Hereinafter referred to as The Epic of Russian Literature.)

⁹Turgenev's Letters: A Selection, Trans. and ed. by E. Lehrman (New York, 1961), p. 129. (Hereinafter referred to as Turgenev's Letters.)

¹⁰Ibid., p. 129.

¹¹Ibid., p. 201.

¹²Ibid.

Turgenev harboured apprehensions that some of the Russian writers, by strictly adhering to one point of view, were becoming as guilty of exaggeration as some of his French colleagues. He valued objectivity and never aligned himself with any doctrine or intense belief. Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Goncharov regarded him as a skeptic and ". . . were irritated by his genteel superiority, his interest in all things, his refusal to yield to anything, his polite pessimism veiled with poetic melancholy."¹³ But those were precisely the characteristics which enabled him ". . . to choose the middle way and to get closer to the truth. . . ."¹⁴ Turgenev once remarked to M. M. Stasiulevich: "A striving for impartiality and the entire truth is one of the few good qualities I am grateful to nature for having given me."¹⁵

Turgenev regarded himself as an objective realist. He endeavoured ". . . not only to catch life in all its manifestations, but also to understand the laws that make it move and that do not always break through to the surface; . . . [to] strive for patterns through the play of chance and, with all this, . . . remain faithful to the truth, . . . [to] not be satisfied with superficial study, and . . . [to] shun false effects."¹⁶ As for the origin of his fictive story, Turgenev remarked in a conversation with Henry James:

. . . who shall say, as you ask, where they come from? We have to go too far back, too far behind, to say. Isn't it all we can say that they come from every quarter of heaven, that they are there at almost any turn of the road? They accumulate, and we are always picking them over, selecting among them. They are the breath of

¹³Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature, p. 265.

¹⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 300.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 78.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 292.

life--by which I mean that life, in its own way, breathes them upon us. They are so, in a manner prescribed and imposed--floated into our minds by the current of life. That reduces to imbecility the vain critic's quarrel, so often, with one's subject, when he hasn't the wit to accept it.¹⁷

By carefully selecting both the rational and the irrational incidents contained in "the current of life" and by cautiously refraining from moulding them into a set system of ideas, Turgenev attained balance, proportion, and harmony in his stories. He quietly developed the art of objective realism, which began to attract other writers. One of the finest was Chekhov.¹⁸

No wonder Turgenev was surprised and perhaps irritated when some of his readers and critics attempted to categorize him as a mystic. He clearly stated to Herzen in 1862: "I have never been addicted to mysticism, and I never will; in respect to God, I maintain the opinion of Faust: .

. . "19 Turgenev then quoted Goethe's well-known lines:

Wer darf ihn nennen,
Und wer bekennen:
Ich glaub' ihn!
Wer empfinden
Und sich unterwinden
Zu sagen: ich glaub' ihn nicht!
[Who has the right to name Him,
Who, to claim,
"Yes, I believe in Him!"?
Yet who can truly feel
And dare to say,
"There is no God."?]20

¹⁷Henry James, The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction, ed. by Leon Edel (New York, 1956), p. 48. (Hereinafter referred to as The Future of the Novel.)

¹⁸Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature, p. 265.

¹⁹Turgenev's Letters, p. 138.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 138-39.

Turgenev repeated these sentiments to Adey in 1870:

You find that I am attracted to mysticism, and cite as examples the Istoria, "Phantoms," and "Ergunov" (although I myself cannot see anything mystical in Ergunov--I merely wanted to present the imperceptibility of the transition from reality to dream, which everyone has experienced for himself); but I can assure you that one thing especially interests me: the physiognomy of life and its truthful depiction. I am completely indifferent to mysticism in all its forms and all I saw in the plot of "Phantoms" was an opportunity to present a series of pictures.²¹

He concluded his letter by saying: "You point to the inevitability of misunderstandings; but, my dear friend, you and I have passed through five decades and must know that to avoid such misfortunes is impossible--and what harm is done?"²² The harm done, as he learned, was the annoying confusion over his purpose as a writer.

Before determining why Turgenev disliked the exaggerated association with mysticism, its tenets should be clarified. Mysticism of the nineteenth century first arose from doubt concerning common knowledge. That uncertainty prepares the way for the reception of a Reality which man senses, yet rarely glimpses, in the world of appearance. Traditionally, the mystic regards the veiled Reality as the highest good, deserving the deepest devotion. By withdrawing from the world of senses and external forms, and by delving into the human mind, he achieves a transcendental experience, termed a revelation. It is based on insight and intuition rather than on reason and analysis.²³ The mystic thus ". . . reverses the ordinary method of thinking: he must believe before he can know. Intellectual faculties are powerless and useless before the question of spirit-

²¹Turgenev's Letters, pp. 199-200.

²²Ibid., p. 200.

²³Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic: and Other Essays (New York, 1959), pp. 9-11.

ual knowledge."²⁴ He affirms simply on the basis of personal experience the verity of direct communion with God. However, mysticism, derived from a Greek word meaning 'closed lips', does not encourage the revelation of its secrets to the uninitiated. "No mystic will ever think his sublimest poetry adequate for his vision. It will always seem but a shadow of light he has seen."²⁵ He views life as ceaseless aspiration; he considers the soul immortal.

Turgenev, however, remained aloof from those religious concepts which claim oneness with the Divine or Ultimate Reality expressed in all temporal things. He once remarked ". . . I prefer Prometheus, I prefer Satan--the model of revolt and individuality. Only an atom though I am, I am my own master; I want truth, and not salvation; I expect to get it from my mind, and not from grace."²⁶ He later affirmed to a friend: ". . . I am not a Christian in your sense and perhaps not in any sense, and therefore let us put the whole thing aside."²⁷ Such declarations prompted one Slavophile to retort that ". . . this man is capable of experiencing only physical feelings; he is quite incapable of appreciating the spiritual aspect of things. . . ."²⁸

However, Turgenev's ghostly tales suggest the author's curiosity about the supernatural phenomena and his desire to investigate them, although several reasons precluded his adherence to the mystical doctrine.

²⁴Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature (Cambridge [England], 1922), p. 8.

²⁵Helen C. White, "Mysticism in Literature," Encyclopedia Americana, Canadian ed., 1963, XIX, 675 a.

²⁶Turgenev's Letters, p. 22.

²⁷Ibid., p. 154.

²⁸Magarshack, Turgenev: A Life, p. 148.

First of all, Turgenev was consumed by an insatiable doubt, which impeded his passage through the doorway to another world. He exclaimed in his poem, Evening, that "not a single living creature has the power to know the secret of existence." Secondly, as a writer, Turgenev could not keep his observations on life in silence nor abandon the world of senses; for colour, sound, warmth, and fragrance are the means by which all artists give shape and form to their experiences. Thirdly, Turgenev was not preoccupied with the goodness of the so-called Ultimate Reality. He keenly felt the antipathy of a merciless Providence, which nullified man's aspirations in life. He expressed his pessimistic attitude in a letter to Granovsky: "Why do the beautiful perish or suffer on earth?," he asked, "or are we to believe that everything beautiful and holy--love and thought--is Jehovah's cold irony? What, oh what, is our life then?"²⁹ Also, Turgenev remained unconvinced of the immortality of the human soul. He wrote in connection with the heroine of A Strange Story: "Such people have lived; hence, they have a right to be depicted in art. I admit of no other immortality: and this immortality, the immortality of human life (in the eyes of art and history), is the basis for our entire work."³⁰ Finally, Turgenev could not tolerate the non-intellectualism associated with mysticism. He professed to be a rationalist and, in "his craving for the hidden knowledge," explored throughout his stories the traditions of the occult which no mystic could accept.³¹

Perhaps the occult attracted Turgenev because "magic, in its un-

²⁹Turgenev's Letters, p. 12.

³⁰Ibid., p. 199.

³¹Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism (New York, 1955), p. 151.

corrupted form, claims to be a practical, intellectual, highly individualistic science; . . ."³² The magician contends that a supersensible "cosmic medium" or "universal agent" exists, interpenetrating and influencing man's world; that it may be discerned and controlled by the disciplined will of man, who thus becomes the master of himself and of fate. The occult, then, promised man ". . . a certain secret knowledge and understanding of things."³³

However, Turgenev, unlike the mystic or the magician, doubted that the riddle of life could be solved simply through faith or through will-power. He felt that ". . . the complete truth is still inaccessible to human beings . . ." and that man can only construct the foundations for knowledge as objectively and as reasonably as possible.³⁴ Turgenev presented his concept of the universe in a letter to Pauline Viardot:

To come back to the stars--you know that there is nothing unusual to see them inspire religious feelings; at least, that is what one finds in all the books on raising children. Well! I assure you that such is not the effect they produce on one who looks at them plainly and without taking sides. The thousands of worlds, strewn about profusely in the most remote depths of space, are nothing but the infinite expansion of life, of that life which occupies everything, penetrates everywhere and causes the aimless and needless sprouting of a whole world of plants and insects in a drop of water. It is the product of an irresistible, involuntary, and instinctive movement which cannot behave otherwise; it is no meditated work. But what is life? Ah! I do not know at all, but I do know that for the moment it is everything, it is at the height of its flowering, it is vigorous. . . .³⁵

Turgenev completed his thought by saying:

This indifferent, impervious, voracious, egotistical, and usurping thing is life, nature--it is God; call it what you like, but do not worship it. Let us understand each other: when it is beautiful or good (which does not always happen), worship it for its beauty or for its goodness, but do not worship it for either its grandeur or

³²Underhill, Mysticism, p. 152.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 77.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 33-34.

its glory! [. . .]

For, first of all, it is neither great nor small; second, there is no more glory in creation than there is in a falling stone, in running water, or in a digesting stomach; all that cannot behave otherwise than to follow the LAW of its existence, which is LIFE.³⁶

Turgenev's words seem to echo those of positivism, a philosophical doctrine developed by Auguste Comte. The French thinker was often called an "algebraic ghost" because he mixed the purely intellectual with the purely non-intellectual.³⁷ His concept of the universe rested upon man's transition through three stages of thought--the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivist. From Aristotle to Galileo, the majority of educated men regarded the cosmos as a vast sphere embracing those of the earth, the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Jupiter, Saturn, and the fixed stars.³⁸ Beyond that encirclement lay a dark, mysterious region where time and space ceased to exist. It represented the "Order Divine," which generated force and motion throughout the cosmos.³⁹ During the seventeenth century, Galileo and Bruno shook the faith of the European mind by adhering to the Copernican system, which conceived the infinity of the universe. Thus, the Italian astronomers pioneered the study of life, based on observation and experiment. The scientific method soon encouraged the French philosophers of the eighteenth century to believe themselves destined to know and to explain all things. They even attributed the religious inclinations in man to the natural causes. Deeming God unnecessary, they

³⁶Turgenev's Letters, pp. 33-34.

³⁷John Henry Bridges, Illustrations of Positivism: A Selection of Articles from the "Positivist Review" in Science, Philosophy, Religion and Politics (London, 1915), p. 349. (Hereinafter referred to as Illustrations of Positivism.) The editor footnotes: "This was the epithet applied to Comte by T. Carlyle."

³⁸Ibid., p. 173.

³⁹Vogüé, The Russian Novel, p. 8.

sought to master life's phenomena through reason. But, by the nineteenth century, disillusionment rapidly developed as the philosophers realized that an increase in knowledge only brought an increase in ignorance. Disenchanted, the enlightened men returned to their former instincts of appealing to a superhuman Power but found themselves in a serious dilemma because scientific logic conflicted with religious belief.

Comte, who lived from 1798 to 1857, simply hoped to build a "ladder of the understanding," without ever assuming to reach the top rung.⁴⁰ He contended that man must study the phenomena of life, inscrutable though they may be. Man, Comte claimed, cannot know the cause of gravity, heat, matter, and electricity any more than the origins of life or the first promptings of love; enough for him to observe the workings of the laws of the universe. These tenets of positivism resemble those of agnosticism, a doctrine which maintains that the knowledge of any ultimate truth is impossible or improbable. John Stuart Mill further explained Comte's consistency with the agnostic attitude:

The doctrine condemns all theological explanations, and replaces them, or thinks them destined to be replaced, by theories which take no account of anything but an ascertained order of phenomena. It is inferred that if this change were completely accomplished, mankind would cease to refer the constitution of Nature to an intelligent will, or to believe at all in a Supreme Creator and Supreme Governor of the World. This supposition is the more natural, as M. Comte was avowedly of that opinion. He indeed disclaimed, with some acrimony, dogmatic atheism, and even says (in a later work, but the earliest contains nothing at variance with it) that the hypothesis of design has much greater verisimilitude than that of a blind mechanism. But conjecture, founded on analogy, did not seem to him a basis to rest a theory on, in a mature state of human intelligence.⁴¹

⁴⁰Bridges, Illustrations of Positivism, p. 226.

⁴¹John Stuart Mill, Auguste Comte and Positivism (Philadelphia, 1866), pp. 13-14.

The French positivist was well aware of the mystery that lay behind the world of phenomena, and its glimpses in the forms of dreams, visions, apparitions, hypnotism, telepathy, and clairvoyance deserved as much scientific inquiry as lightning, language, or fossils. Comte, then, admitted the presence of the irrational in everyday life but felt further meditation futile.

At this point Turgenev seems to waver from the positivist doctrine, though no evidence indicates that he ever read Comte; however, the dynamic revolutions in thought always appear to be simultaneously reflected in the literature of the particular times. Although positivism may have influenced Turgenev's thinking, he maintained, without rejecting agnosticism, a more daring and courageous attitude towards the exploration of the realms of the supernatural. Turgenev, therefore, continued to dwell upon the thought of an unknown Force both good and evil, beautiful and ugly, kind and cruel, indifferently destroying man, thus rendering his life to the absurd and the insignificant. In one of the Poems in Prose, Nature, Turgenev describes a dream in which a woman representing death visits him. He attempts to ask her why she annihilates man, but she disappears without answering. He suddenly awakens no wiser, no happier than before. Turgenev seemed to miss the comfort and security provided by religion, once writing:

He who has religion . . . has everything and cannot lose anything; but he who has not got it, has nothing, and I feel it all the stronger as I myself belong to those who have not got it. . . . The naturalness of death is more terrible than its unusualness and suddenness. Religion alone can conquer this fear. But religion must first become a natural need, and he who has not got it must avert his eyes thoughtlessly or stoically (it is really the same thing). . . . Is death nothing more than the extinction of life? . . . I simply do not know

what to think, except to say again, Happy are those who believe.⁴²

That personal wistfulness was obviously responsible for Turgenev's touching upon the elements of mysticism. They already became in his early ghostly tales an important part of his realistic and positivistic approach to life, which did not allow him to exclude the supernatural from his study of man and man's destiny in the world.

⁴²Magarshack, Turgenev: A Life, p. 208.

CHAPTER II

TURGENEV'S EARLY GHOSTLY TALES

Turgenev soon caught the public's fancy when his first major work, A Sportsman's Sketches, appeared in 1852. The series of short stories describing the peasants and their everyday life became, in the eyes of some readers, a testament for the abolition of serfdom in Russia. Its effect was compared to that of Uncle Tom's Cabin, a novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, protesting slavery in America.

Such parallels prompted Henry James to astutely say:

This, perhaps, is forcing a point, for M. Turgénieff's group of tales strikes us much less as a passionate pièce de circonstance than as a disinterested work of art. But circumstances helped it, of course, and it made a great impression--an impression that testifies to no small culture on the part of Russian readers. For never, surely, was a work with a polemic bearing more consistently low in tone, as painters say. The author treats us to such a scanty dose of flagrant horrors that the moral of the book is obvious only to attentive readers. No single episode pleads conclusively against the "peculiar institution" of Russia; the lesson is in the cumulative testimony of a multitude of fine touches--in an after-sense of sadness that sets wise readers thinking. It would be difficult to name a work that contains better instruction for those heated spirits who are fond of taking sides on the question of "art for art."⁴³

The American critic tended to feel that many readers, concerned with the iniquities suffered by the serf and the slave, misunderstood Turgenev's main motive for writing A Sportsman's Sketches.

Contrary to popular supposition, Turgenev never regarded himself as a political or social reformer. He regarded himself

⁴³Henry James, French Poets and Novelists (London, 1893), p. 221.

as an artist seeking "to give poetic shape to reality."⁴⁴ Life, simple or complex, happy or sad, provided him with all the material he needed for a story. His words, in regard to First Love, may be applied to A Sportsman's Sketches: ". . . I did not write at all with the aim of producing, as they say, a striking effect; I did not think up this story; life itself gave me the whole tale."⁴⁵ As Henry James observed, "story in the conventional sense of the word--a fable constructed, like Wordsworth's phantom, 'to startle and waylay'--there is as little as possible."⁴⁶ For that reason, many readers, concerned with the development of intrigue, suspense, and adventure, found little excitement in Turgenev's sketches. Edmund Wilson wrote: "Nothing could be more different than a story, say, by Maupassant. There are no tricks of the professional raconteur, no sudden surprises at the end. We follow a steady narrative, built up with convincing detail."⁴⁷ The contrived plot never tempted Turgenev. When discussing his method of "arriving at a story," he said to James: "The result is that I'm often accused of not having 'story' enough."⁴⁸ However, Turgenev continued:

I seem to myself to have as much as I need--to show my people, to exhibit their relations with each other; for that is all my measure. If I watch them long enough I see them come together, I see them placed, I see them engaged in this or that act and in this or that difficulty. How they look and move and speak and behave, always in the setting I have found for them--of which I dare say, alas, que cela manque souvent

⁴⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 81.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁶Henry James, The Art of Fiction and Other Essays (New York, 1948), p. 111.

⁴⁷Edmund Wilson, "Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop," Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments, trans. by David Magarshack (London, 1958), p. 49. (Hereinafter referred to as Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences.)

⁴⁸James, The Future of the Novel, p. 47.

d'architecture. But I would rather, I think, have too little architecture than too much--when there's danger of its interfering with my measure of the truth. The French of course like more of it than I give--having by their own genius such a hand for it; and indeed one must give all one can.⁴⁹

Turgenev, as he implies, did not intend to compose "good" tales or to initiate political or social reforms. Why, then, a bewildered reader may ask, did he write A Sportsman's Sketches? Henry James suggested that the Russian writer simply wished to depict ". . . the usual, the inevitable, the intimate--the intimate for weal or woe."⁵⁰ James further elaborated in his essay, Turgenev and Tolstoy:

Without a patch of "plot" to draw blood, the story he mainly tells us, the situation he mainly gives, runs as if for dear life. His first book was practically full evidence of what, if we have to specify, is finest in him--the effect, for the commonest truth, of an exquisite envelope of poetry. In this medium of feeling--full as it were, of all the echoes and shocks of the universal danger and need--everything in him goes on; the sense of fate and folly and pity and wonder and beauty.⁵¹

The American writer continued to explain in his article:

The tenderness, the humor, the variety of A Sportsman's Sketches revealed on the spot an observer with a rare imagination. These faculties had attached themselves, together, to small things and to great: to the misery, the simplicity, the piety, the patience, of the unemancipated peasant; to all the natural wonderful life of earth and air and winter and summer and field and forest; to queer apparitions of country neighbors, of strange local eccentrics; to old world practices and superstitions; to secrets gathered and types disinterred and impressions absorbed in the long, close contacts with man and nature involved in the passionate pursuit of game.⁵²

In James' opinion, the reader cannot help but murmur as he passes from sketch to sketch: "It is life itself . . . and not this or that or the other story-teller's more or less clever 'arrangement' of life."⁵³

⁴⁹James, The Future of the Novel, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 229.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 230.

⁵³James, French Poets and Novelists, p.222.

Turgenev, then, primarily wished to portray "life itself" in A Sportsman's Sketches. Always attempting to be an objective observer, he wove the elements of the supernatural into his compositions because dreams, visions, and apparitions formed a vibrant part of the fabric of life. He thus developed the technique of the narrator and the fantastic in order to add another dimension of reality to story-telling.

In the first story to be considered, Bezhin Lea, Turgenev recollected many of the superstitions he had heard as a child. He even included a family ghost, who, the Spasskoe peasants claimed, walked through the estate at night. But Turgenev quickly reminded one inattentive reader:

As for your remarks about "Bezhin Prairie," I agree with some, but not some others. For example, I did not at all wish to make the story fantastic; these are not German boys who have come together, but Russians. The truest remark was made to me by Dudyshkin, who said that my boys speak like grown-ups.⁵⁴

Briefly, Bezhin Lea tells of a hunter, who ". . . spends a warm summer-night lying on the grass listening to the small boys who are sent out to watch the horses at pasture, as they sit chattering to each other of hobgoblins and fairies; . . ."⁵⁵ The French literary critic, Vogüé, viewed the boys as ". . . interpreters of the old Slav world."⁵⁶ Yet he felt that their stories were far more natural and far more serious than either the legends of the Song of Igor or the tales of Hoffmann.⁵⁷

Turgenev begins his sketch with a poet's perception of eventide. He quietly suggests the mingling of the supernatural in the natural. The hunter soon perceives an atmosphere tinged with magic and sorcery. He finds

⁵⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 37.

⁵⁵James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 222.

⁵⁶Vogüé, The Russian Novel, p. 165.

⁵⁷Ibid.

woodland and valley steeped in darkness and silence. Chilling shadows silently emerge from the thickening mist while, overhead, bats, the portents of peril and torment, whirl mysteriously against the lustreless sky. In a secluded hollow, shaped like a witch's cauldron, loom huge stones which resemble an ancient altar to some malevolent deity. No wonder trepidation overcomes the hunter, who is lost in this ghostly forest. He repeats the cry so often uttered by man alone in the universe--"What is this all about? Where am I?" Suddenly the hunter descries a fire and hurries to join the company of those around it. The flames of the fire crackle and flare, as if warding off the malignant dark with their sacred light. As the hunter begins to contemplate the magnificent yet mysterious star-studded sky above him, Turgenev seems to have imperceptibly used nature to suggest man's mystical leanings towards the unknown, which conceals itself from man behind a vast, black curtain.

Hoping that the boys would resume their talk, the hunter feigns to be asleep. He soon senses a particular kinship with Pavlusha, a lad possessing direct and very intelligent eyes. Pavlusha skeptically listens to the rapid exchange of stories about evil wood and water sprites. He gently laughs at the boys' fright when unexpected noises pierce the silence of the night. As his companions worriedly whisper, he goes to investigate and declares that no demons are howling out there, only dogs barking at a wolf. Pavlusha characteristically counters the boys' wonderings at strange sounds and happenings with logical explanations. The wails are the cries of herons or snipes, and the groans are the croaking of frogs--not of lost souls. The heavenly foreboding is an eclipse of the sun, and the threatening appearance of Trishka is simply a local lad with a barrel on his head. However, the boys persist in describing that evil demon who plagues all

honest Christians. At last Pavlusha remarks that he does not understand why such a devilish thing should haunt the world, especially since he himself has found no conclusive evidence of its existence. When the boys assert that a white dove flying overhead is a purified soul going to heaven, Pavlusha simply replies: "Maybe." Even when he hears the voice of Vasia, a drowned boy calling from the river depths, he does not cross himself nor appeal to God for protection. He does not think himself victimized by some anti-Christian agent. To the other boys, terrified by the ominous foreboding of the water sprite, Pavlusha resolutely declares that he attaches little significance to the incident in the reeds and that, in any case, one cannot escape his fate. Like Turgenev, he could not unquestioningly believe in the boys' mystical "evidences" of an unworldly power existing and determining man's destiny.

With the approach of morning, the hunter turns homeward, well versed in the village-lore. Later, he learns that Pavlusha was accidentally killed the same year, not by drowning but by falling off a horse. Though the hunter, or rather Turgenev, does not really believe that the supernatural caused the lad's untimely death, he, nevertheless, creates a mood of perplexity about the coincidental occurrence.

The next story, Living Relics, which was added to A Sportsman's Sketches in 1874 but conceived during the 1840's, suggests that Turgenev wished to examine more closely the mystical influences upon an ordinary being's life. The hunter's excursions take him to Alekseevka, where he discovers a former servant, Lukeria, lying partially paralyzed in an old, musty shack. Seven years ago, the pretty young girl, enchanted by the joyful singing of a nightingale, stepped onto her verandah one evening. She seemed to imagine a voice, resembling her betrothed's, enticing her; captivated, she drew forward, slipped to the ground, and severely injured her-

self. Her accident has an uncanny connotation, as if she were under the manipulations of some invisible, mysterious force. Lukeria's reconciliation to her grave misfortune astonishes the hunter. Her bronzed face and hands remind him of the saints depicted on the ancient icons. Grateful, patient, unembittered, Lukeria listens and watches and smells the life around her. She quietly accepts her suffering as the ordination of God; He knows best and, out of love, has given her a cross to bear. Often while lying so still, a wondrous feeling suffuses Lukeria and she senses the visitation of some marvelous thought. But, when the hunter presses for further revelation, Lukeria mystically replies that she cannot really say because it diffuses so quickly. Turgenev then touches upon the supernatural elements of dreams and visions in order to illuminate Lukeria's marvelous but undefinable thought. She sees Christ freeing her from all suffering and taking her to heaven, her parents thanking her for her martyrdom which lightens their burden in the other world, and Death appointing her hour of departure from earth. But, afterwards, Lukeria wonders if she envisioned anything at all. Her priest simply informs her that only those of the ecclesiastical rank can attain such mystical experiences.

The hunter closes his story with Lukeria's death, which occurred on the day her dream forebode. Before expiring, she exclaimed that church bells were ringing although it was not Sunday; they came "from above." Though, the hunter does not entirely accept Lukeria's naïve descriptions as positive proof of transcendental reality, he narrates her supernatural experience with the utmost reverence.

In the following sketch, Turgenev continues his study of the inexplicable, invisible force steering man's course. He portrays a man without a name, who becomes entangled in the mysterious web of life. Reminis-

cent of the author himself, the man is ". . . an erstwhile student of Hegel, whose idealism proved but of little help in the rough-and-tumble of a backwoods environment; . . ."58 Briefly, The Hamlet of Shchigrov District tells of ". . . a poor gentleman whom the Sportsman, staying overnight at a fine house where he has been dining, finds assigned to him as room-mate, and who, lying in bed and staring at him grotesquely over the sheets, relates his lugubrious history."59

As a youth, the man without a name had expectations, hopes, and ideals. He travelled abroad. He listened to the scientist, the philosopher, and the Slavophile, but discovers in the end that they really know nothing. He thirsts for knowledge and, tossing his books aside, determines to learn the truth from life itself. However, to his dismay, life constantly eludes explanation and merely says, "Take me as I am." The man without a name keenly feels its invisible power overruling his own free will, and he resents being condemned to ignorance and unoriginality. Consumed by thoughts of helplessness and worthlessness, he slides into bitterness and deep melancholy. He protests against life for treating him so lightly, for considering him just a joke. Gradually he becomes reconciled in body and spirit to his unknown fate. When the hunter asks the man his name, he replies that he is only an anonymous person crippled by fate, one of the many Hamlets in life. Before dawn breaks, he vanishes as mysteriously as he came.

Similar Hamlets appear in the sketches, Chertopkhanov and Nedopiuskin, and The End of Chertopkhanov. Turgenev explains their origin in a

⁵⁸Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature, p. 254.

⁵⁹James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 223.

letter to Annenkov:

I only wish to tell you how the thing came into my head. The incident I narrated happened once to my neighbour Chertov (the real name of Chertopkhanov). It was told me by his daughter, who may now become indignant at my lack of discretion.⁶⁰

The hunter is startled by his first encounter with Pantelei Chertopkhanov, the descendant of a Russian noble family, who became a pauper because of the extravagances and the caprices of his forefathers. That quirk of fate changes him from an amiable though hot-tempered youth into a morose, insolent, violent man. Only one admirable quality remains--that of opposing injustice and oppression. It firmly binds him to Tikhon Nedopiuskin, also a poverty-stricken man, suffering from the pranks of fate.

Weak and timid, Nedopiuskin has neither the strength nor the courage to protest. He submissively bears the yoke of capricious fate, which had indifferently harried his father to the grave. Pantelei, however, retaliates. His brutal killing of the hare may be interpreted as his revenge for being shaken by fate as a trapped hare is shaken by a dog in pursuit. Pantelei ignores his unpleasant experiences and failures, but, two years later, a magnitude of real calamities breaks him. First his beloved, Masha, abandons him. Then his friend, Tikhon, dies. As his affairs go completely downhill, fate momentarily cheers him with a magnificent steed, presented to him by a grateful Jew whom Pantelei had rescued from an irate mob of peasants. Again fate smiles on Pantelei, and he inherits two thousand rubles from a distant aunt. But after contentedly musing and meditating, Pantelei has an ominous dream. He awakens, rushes to the stable, and discovers that his greatest joy in life has been stolen. Desperate and dis-

⁶⁰Turgenev's Letters, p. 249.

traught, Pantelei vows to comb the world for his prized possession, Malek-Adel. He returns, one year later, leading a dapple-grey horse and jubilantly exclaims that he has defied and outwitted fate at last. Yet suspicions gnaw his heart. He fears that the horse is not the original one and, when the deacon agrees, Pantelei is furious. He demands revenge for the trickery of life, but from whom? He decides to annihilate the horse in order to show the world that it cannot jest with him. A quiet rustling in the depths of the forest, where no living creature should be, arouses his fear that he has an invisible witness to the deed. Later Pantelei dies, drunk with vodka, in miserable squalor. The hunter is struck by the tragic ending of a fellow-man, who sought to wrestle with fate's decrees.

The notion that some inexplicable force controlled man and barred his road to happiness perturbed Turgenev more and more. He wrote Countess Lambert:

The idea recently entered my head that the fate of almost every person contains something tragic--but the tragedy is frequently concealed from the person himself by the banal superficiality of life. Whoever remains on the surface (and many do) frequently does not even suspect that he is a hero of a tragedy.⁶¹

Turgenev's positivistic outlook urged him to go beyond the surface of life and learn why some fatal curse overhung the lives of ordinary people. After the appearance of A Sportsman's Sketches, Turgenev delved more deeply into the realms of the supernatural. Dreams and visions became a serious source for new windows into reality.

Faust, published in 1856, represents Turgenev's renewed approach. In this ghostly tale, he explores the mysterious aspect of life through the medium of poetry which excites the imagination and pushes the intellect

⁶¹Turgenev's Letters, p. 107.

towards the fearful unknown. He reveals the private diary of Pavel Alexandrovich B. . . , who has returned to his family estate after several years absence and revived his friendship with Vera Nikolaevna Eltzov, a childhood sweetheart, now married to an undistinguished man. During this time, Vera has not glanced at a single line of poetry, in deference to her mother's wishes. Madame Elztov, recently deceased, had greatly distrusted anything capable of exciting the imagination. She had declared that she feared the unknown in life, which rarely but suddenly makes its way to the surface and wreaks havoc upon its victims. Her dread, skeptically termed as superstition by Pavel, was founded upon her own personal experiences and transmitted to her daughter. Madame Eltzov had firmly believed that one must subdue himself, not break himself, before life's decrees. Such an end, she felt, could only be attained through the fulfillment of duty and the suppression of emotion. Madame Eltzov refused Pavel as a suitor for Vera because she suspected that his poetic temperament would awaken her daughter's well-buried hopes and dreams. Instead she selected Primkov, a man incapable of understanding poetry and, therefore, incapable of disturbing Vera's peace of mind. Only after the marriage did Madame Eltzov feel confident in freeing her daughter from all restrictions. Pavel now offers to read Goethe's "Faust" to Vera. Then he encourages her to read Pushkin's "Evgeny Onegin." As Vera moves from the rational world of prose to the irrational world of poetry, she demonstrates the awakenings of her emotions. She tenderly embraces her small daughter and blushes when Pavel lightly kisses her hand.

Yet Vera, because of her unusual family background, already suspects the risk she has taken by freeing her imagination. Madame Eltzov's gloomy portrait serves as a constant reminder of the folly of following one's heart.

But Vera is prepared to suffer the consequences of her actions resolutely and courageously. Pavel perceives that Vera has a calm and rationalistic mind; hence, her almost superstitious dread of the gloomy subterranean puzzles him. When he tries to learn the reason for her faith in visions, she declines to say. At their first and final tryst Vera vows that her mother's apparition materialized. Pavel, however, saw no one. He believes that her imagination was overly influenced by the stories of her mysterious grandfather, who claimed to summon spirits and commune with the dead. Pavel himself doubts the verity of the occult.

Turgenev once again turns to nature to suggest the supernatural force present in the world. After the first poetry reading, Prinkov spots dark thunderclouds in the sky and predicts a terrible storm. Vera shudders at his words as though she recognizes some ominous foreboding. The lightning illuminating her face suggests the death and destruction soon to strike her. The hooting of an owl premonishes her final shriek of anguish before perishing.

The catastrophe astounds Pavel. He recognizes that Vera's imagination did not deceive her and that he did not understand life at all. Pavel tries to convince himself that he had no inkling of the damage his actions would do. Yet, after reading the "forbidden" book to Vera, he felt the pale stars in the dark sky mysteriously gazing down at him. He also sensed the eyes of Madame Eltzov's portrait turning reproachfully towards him as if warning him to leave well enough alone. But Pavel admits that he was under the influence of Goethe's "Faust". Though he had experienced much in life, Pavel still suspected that the world concealed something to which he had not yet been exposed. Perhaps he unconsciously wished to be like Goethe's tragic hero and discover the secrets of the

universe despite the terrible risk involved. Pavel thus explored beneath the surface of life and glimpsed the mysterious play of fate, which he had previously called blind chance. However, he never learned why secret forces should govern human life nor why the dead should interfere with the living. He simply concluded like Madame Eltzov that one must renounce and submit before the unknown.

Turgenev wrote Faust at a critical point in his personal life when he felt the last vestiges of hope for happiness slipping through his hands. Perhaps he intended to model Pavel upon himself. Though Herzen criticized the story for its supernatural content, Turgenev had never expected the work to appeal to everyone. Thus its "strange fate" did not surprise him. To Goncharov, he wrote:

I certainly cannot repeat A Sportsman's Sketches ad infinitum! And I do not feel like giving up writing, either. All that remains is to write stories in which, without my pretending to wholeness, to vigor in the characters, or to a profound and thorough penetration of life, I can express whatever comes into my head.⁶²

To Tolstoy, Turgenev wrote:

As for my "Faust", I do not think you will like it very much. My works could please you--and perhaps had a certain influence on you--only until you began to depend on yourself. I have nothing to teach you now; you see only a difference in manner; you see the blunders and omissions. All you can do is study man, his heart, and the really great writers. But I am a writer of a transitional period, and I am only fit for people in a transitional state.⁶³

Turgenev's early ghostly tales imply that he wished to express his deep distrust in the stability of human happiness. The word, "transitional," suggesting the movement from one condition to another, perhaps contains the clue to Turgenev's supernatural stories. They continually fluctuate from

⁶²Turgenev's Letters, p. 102.

⁶³Ibid., p. 79.

the natural to the supernatural, the real to the unreal, the rational to the irrational. They neither halt nor conclude. Turgenev increases this movement in his later ghostly tales, perhaps hoping that speed would quicken his capture of the elusive force leveling man's aspirations.

CHAPTER III

TURGENEV'S NIGHTMARES

The ghostly tales written after 1864 became more terrifying, as Turgenev more audaciously pursued the fleeting force of evilness infiltrating the world. He strongly supposed that its demonic agents, masked in human or animal form, surreptitiously manipulated its earthly victims, who fruitlessly sought relief in religion and pilgrimage. The terror of malevolence overcoming beneficence was augmented by the realistic settings that Turgenev chose for his supernatural plots.

Marc Slonim perhaps disregarded Turgenev's ghostly tales when he asserted that the Russian author

. . . makes life and nature appear rather tame, he avoids mentioning the seamy side of reality or plunging too deeply beneath its surface, for fear of encountering the monsters of depravity, hatred, or abnormality. He takes great care not to pain or shock his readers, and his prose is decorous and seemly, suave and well-bred. His voice is never raised or altered; there are no surprises in his narrative, no breaks in his sentences.⁶⁴

Edmund Wilson, for example, disagrees with such an opinion and says that only in comparison to Gogol's works do Turgenev's writings seem tame. The critic remarks:

They are certainly less compelling than the diabolic tales of Gogol, from which they may partly derive, for the reason that the world of Gogol, being always distorted and turbid, is more favourable for this kind of horror, but they are none the less creepy enough and can hold their own with any such fantasies. The fault that one would find with them is rather that they are not merely horrible but hopeless. The

⁶⁴Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature, p. 270.

forces that battle with the goblins are too feeble; they do not have a chance of success.⁶⁵

Turgenev's first story, written in this nightmarish vein, appeared in 1866. The narrator of The Dog, Porfiry Kapitonych, tells a skeptical circle of friends about an experience of his, incompatible with the laws of nature. Amazed at hearing a dog scratching beneath his bed, he thoroughly investigates the room and finds nothing there. Regarding his servant's explanation of the incident as mere superstition, he decides to ignore all future disturbances on the grounds that an invisible creature never harmed anyone. Curiosity finally persuades Porfiry to perform an experiment upon his card-playing companion, who is horrified by the nocturnal noise. He declares that is an ominous foreboding, and he urges Porfiry to exorcise the vile visitation with the aid of a priest. But the imaginary dog faithfully follows the narrator into the Old Believer's chambers despite the presence of holy relics, shrine-candles, icons, and incense. The priest, unable to divine the vision's import, sends Porfiry to another religious seer who exclaims that the possession of a real dog will dispel the demonic agent. Porfiry relaxes as he experiences the verity of the mystic's words.

For some unknown reason, a rabid dog appears in the neighbourhood and attacks Porfiry. Tresor valiantly comes to the rescue but suffers terribly during the struggle. The narrator, unable to sleep that night, goes to the stable where his protector curls up beside him in the hay. As Porfiry wonders why such an unusual occurrence should have befallen him, he observes the moon enigmatically staring at him, as though trying to mes-

⁶⁵Edmund Wilson, "Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop," Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences, p. 54.

merize him with its bewitching radiance. He sticks out his tongue in defiance of the celestial arrogance. Gradually, Porfiry detects an ever-increasing shadow, hurtling towards him. Panic grips his heart as he realizes that the mad-dog is pursuing him once more. This time the sanguinary beast kills Tresor, while Porfiry narrowly escapes its wrath. Later he learns that a soldier shot the mad-dog, apparently in accordance with fate's decree. Porfiry offers no explanation for his violent encounter with that relentless force in the world, and the supernatural adventure continues to perplex his friends.

Though Turgenev was not concerned with the symbolical import of his ghostly tales, the series of pictures which he presented, for example, in The Dog, may suggest something more than an objective analysis of life. Perhaps the two animals represent the two opposing forces hunting man. The mad-dog, a visible extension of the invisible beast haunting Porfiry, premonishes the enmity, the malevolence, and the destruction awaiting man. Its reddish colouring suggests war; its howling, death. A descendant of the wolf, it belongs to the subterranean realms of witchcraft and sorcery. Christian tradition considers the dog as a symbol of paganism and Satanism, yet also regards it as a symbol of friendship and protection. The crusaders depicted the dog on their banners to prove that they followed God as faithfully as a dog follows its master.⁶⁶ Porfiry's dog, obtained through mystical revelation, portends the love, the goodness, and the salvation awaiting man. But, in Turgenev's story, the malevolent force appears more omnipotent than the beneficent.

⁶⁶Gertrude Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols (3 vols.; New York, 1962), I, 456.

Turgenev did not really wish to publish The Dog although he considered it to be a fairly major and important work. It represented another step towards his understanding the unknown forces in life. However, the thoughts, prevalent in Turgenev's day, did not necessarily suggest supernatural phenomena as practical material for examination. Most proponents of positivism did not preoccupy themselves with transcendentalism because they felt that they could not attain absolute knowledge. Whether the spiritual world existed or not, had no bearing upon their solutions of the problems in the immediate world of sensory experience. The positivistic method of investigating reality attracted Turgenev, who wished to study scientifically those irrational occurrences, frequently reported by ordinary human beings. Turgenev's attraction for the supernatural partially resulted from the positivistic probes into the relationships between man and his surroundings. Since Comte's doctrine never rejected the mystical aspects of life, it therefore provided an outlet for the study of such phenomena as dreams, visions, apparitions, and hypnotism. Turgenev felt compelled to explore these experiences of man, though he did not overestimate their capacity to explain the enigma. He planned to accept whatever he learned because he neither denied nor asserted the existence of the transcendental. Realizing that his approach to reality differed from the approach of his contemporaries, Turgenev generally dismissed his supernatural stories as amusing trifles. Yet, to him, they constituted the backbone of his serious probe into the mystery of life.

Perhaps Turgenev's fear of undeserved criticism and confusion with mysticism explains his attempts to conceal his predilection for the irrational. His friends apparently found The Dog weak and unconvincing. Even Suvorin, who thought the story terribly magnetic when narrated by Turgenev

to a literary group in Moscow, felt disappointed by the published version.

The Russian critic commented:

One was impressed with the idea that, when he sat down to write it, he was overcome with apprehension lest his readers and critics should suppose that he believed in this mysterious adventure. But conviction on the part of the author--in appearance at least--is precisely what is required in such cases. He told the tale with enthusiasm, and even turned pale, and his face assumed a cast of fear at dramatic points.⁶⁷

Suvorin then added that he suffered from insomnia for several nights after hearing this ghostly tale.

Perhaps the same fear of misinterpretation applies to Turgenev's next supernatural study, A Strange Story, which appeared in 1869. Replying to Adeev's literary criticisms, he said:

The "strange story" about which you talk is trifle, but I am not capable of anything more now. Are you really so submerged in what is "contemporary" that you will not tolerate any non-contemporary characters?⁶⁸

He questioned Adeev's claim that Sophia, the tragic heroine of A Strange Story, was inappropriate for the literature of the times and thus aroused only contemptuous pity. Turgenev concluded by asking: "Must every character really and without fail be something like a copy book: 'that is how one must (or must not) behave?'"⁶⁹ Turgenev refused to follow such stereotype patterns. He wished to depict without alteration the physiognomy of various people, confronting the irrational in life.

In A Strange Story, Turgenev portrays the tragic fate of a "queer" girl whom he glimpsed during the days of his youth. He may have described the incident to Henry James, who records in his essay on the Russian writer

⁶⁷Ivan Turgenev, Sochineniia (15 vols.; Moskva-Leningrad, 1960-67), p. 497. Translation here is by Isabel F. Hapgood, "Preface," The Novels and Stories of Ivan Turgénieff (16 vols.; New York, 1903-1904), XII, xi.

⁶⁸Turgenev's Letters, p. 199.

⁶⁹Ibid.

that:

He told me once of his having been visited by a religious sect. The sect consisted of but two persons, one of whom was the object of worship and the other the worshipper. The divinity apparently was traveling about Europe in company with his prophet. They were intensely serious but it was very handy, as the term is, for each. The god had always his altar and the altar had (unlike some altars) always its god.⁷⁰

The narrator of A Strange Story describes his first encounter with Sophia, a young girl whose enigmatic expression perturbs him. Though her face possesses nothing ideal, he vaguely senses that she is not of this earth. Her eyes apprehend the knowledge of something extraordinary about life. When the narrator tells Sophia about his curious adventure with an illiterate peasant, who seemingly resurrected his eccentric French tutor, she refutes his rational explanations founded on hypnotism and magnetism. As Sophia steadfastly expresses her faith in visions, miracles, and immortality, her pensive face reminds him of the portraits of the pre-Raphaelite Madonnas. Sophia wishes to find a religious preceptor, who will show her the way to self-sacrifice and God. The narrator, slightly amused by her quasi-mystical words, soon forgets the strange girl when he transfers to another province. Two years elapse before he suddenly encounters Sophia again, this time accompanying a "man of God." The narrator recognizes him as the village magnetizer, who summoned up spirits and communed with the dead. This incredible ability has reduced him to a ragged beggar, who shakes rusty chains and utters unintelligible words. Sophia attends him as Mary Magdalene. Her face now expresses ecstasy and resolution. When the narrator attempts to speak to her, she rushes away with the holy fool and vanishes forever. He then adds that Sophia died without revealing her revelations to anyone while her epileptic companion continu-

⁷⁰Henry James, Partial Portraits (London, 1905), p. 309.

ed his demented wanderings. The couple's strange story puzzled the narrator for some time. Sophia, as her name implies, sought wisdom but whether she attained it or not, through the medium of her holy fool, Turgenev does not say. Perhaps his citation of Shakespeare's words in Enough suggests the negative:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing . . .⁷¹

Turgenev continued to develop the theme of the futility of life and the association of madness with the supernatural in Knock, Knock, Knock. Appearing in 1870, it represents the author's most skeptical study of the irrational. In defense of his story, Turgenev wrote Filosofov:

. . . I can not agree that even "Knock, Knock, Knock" is absurd. What is it, then . . . , you ask? This is what it is: a general study of the Russian suicide, who rarely shows anything poetic or pathetic but, on the contrary, almost always performs the act as a result of egoism and narrow-mindedness, with an admixture of mysticism and fatalism. You will tell me that my study has not succeeded. . . . Perhaps, but I merely wanted to point out the justifications and appropriateness of treating purely psychic (not political, and not social) questions.⁷²

In the tale, Knock, Knock, Knock, Alexander Vasil'evich Ridel recalls his student days when he observed the traumatic effect of a supposedly supernatural occurrence upon a nondescript army officer. Ilia Stepanych Teglev, pretending to be a Marlinsky hero, establishes his reputation as a predestined man by miraculously rescuing a dog from an ice floe and by accurately predicting the order of a shuffled deck of cards. He believes in auguries, cabalistic numbers, climacteric years,

⁷¹Turgenev footnotes: "Macbeth. Act 5, Scene 5."

⁷²Turgenev's Letters, pp. 267-68.

lucky and unlucky days, benign and malign fate. He clumsily expresses his anxiety and trepidation over the insignificance of life. However, despite his petty egoism and feigned indifference, Teglev still gives Ridel the impression that he belongs to the group of truly "fatalistic" men. His drowsy eyes suggest the hypnotic grip of some unknown power, controlling his thoughts and actions. Spending a restless night at Teglev's ramshackle residence, Ridel accidentally knocks a hollow beam. Its resonance so startles the officer that Ridel decides to tease his fatalistic companion. He repeats his trick until Teglev runs outside. Quietly returning, he announces that a female voice called him from beyond the grave. Ridel investigates the premises and informs his host that the noises probably came from a thief prowling in the garden. Unable to endure more ridicule about his sudden fright, Teglev explains that he jilted a pretty young girl, who most likely swallowed poison after his departure. He declares that her spirit has come for vengeance. Again Ridel advises the officer to place fact before fantasy.

But superstitious dread eventually affects Ridel's reasoning faculties. He imagines Teglev's tapping on the window pane as a premonition of some evil force seeking entrance to gain its victim. He is startled by the invisible whisperer in the garden. Ridel explains his prank to Teglev who replies that a malicious force caused him to release the officer after they met in the darkness. Sensing some impending disaster, Ridel continues his search for Teglev.

Once more nature is attuned to the fantastic. The muffled atmosphere transposes the large to the small, the small to the large; the distant to the near; the near to the distant. The glazed moon and the glis-

tening stars suffuse the sky with tones of the extraordinary. The dusky mist, imparting a dreamlike quality to the surroundings, thickly envelopes Teglev as if trying to prevent his rescue from the darkness. Teglev's servant fears that forest fiends lead them astray so that the nocturnal power can complete its work unheeded. Ridel shivers as he recalls words from "King Lear," which say that such cold, damp nights drive men to madness and destruction. Suddenly they hear a faint pop, but, when they find Teglev, he is already dead. His suicidal note alludes to man's inability to comprehend the designs of fate.

Ridel thinks the letter, written à la Marlinsky, rather insipid and silly. Later he discovers that the feminine whispering originated from a peddler, that Masha died from cholera, and that Teglev had symptoms of brain-fever. Ridel, feeling that imagination duped the officer, thinks no more about the incredible affair. But, like Turgenev, he has no intention of preventing anyone else from believing in fatalism and predestination. The knocking seems to suggest one's desire to open the door of revelation, and also fate's demand to enter and grab its victim. Turgenev uses these parallels in the ghostly tale to be considered next.

Written in 1876 and entitled The Dream, it delicately registers Turgenev's imperceptible and reversible transitions from fantasy to reality. The Dream is a marvelous representation of ". . . those artistic, semi-fantastic tales in which the mystical romanticism of Turgenev's nature outwardly expressed itself from time to time."⁷³

The silent suffering of an unhappy widow haunts her bewildered son. A fragile, introspective lad, he is susceptible to dreaming. Though

⁷³Hapgood, "Preface," The Novels and Stories of Ivan Turgénieff, XVI, x.

he can never quite recall what he envisions, he always remembers the sensation of partially crossing the threshold of a door, which opens into another world. The lad once said that, if he had religious inclinations, he would have become a monk and thus divined the secret import of his dreams. He especially wishes to understand why he repeatedly envisions a terrible man, purporting to be his father. Then one day the lad encounters his nocturnal visitor on the street. To make sure that his imagination is not deceiving him, he studies the mysterious man and even converses with him. The boy thinks that the baron is more frightening than any apparition. Somewhat agitated, he returns home only to discover his mother lying dazedly in bed. According to the gardener, a gaunt intruder frightened her. When at last she begins to speak, she appears to be in a hypnotic trance. The widow reveals that an insolent, black-eyed officer continually hounded her, poisoning her life in the capital. Left alone in her room one night, she heard a strange tapping and scratching. The ominous foreboding of some vicious force, seeking entrance to capture its victim, horrified her. When her dreadful pursuer suddenly appeared in the room, she fainted and the reality of the incident bordered on the dream. Regaining consciousness, she examined the wall and discovered a trap-door. While she never told her husband anything, darkness invaded their formerly happy life. The widow, perplexed by her dire fate, reproaches God for His unjustness and lapses into a delirium.

The boy determines to solve the riddle of her cheerless life. He imagines a voice calling him. Fascinated yet frightened, he follows it and finds himself standing on the twisted streets he dreamt about. Encouraged by this evidence of the impossible becoming possible, the boy continues walking until he reaches the many-storied house he dreamt about.

He confidently knocks upon the door, but the servant denies him entrance. Disappointed at being unable to penetrate any further into the mystery, the boy wanders towards the turbulent seaside. There he discovers the baron's corpse, lying on a desolate stretch of salty sand. Staring at the dead body of his father, he feels its evil blood coursing through his veins, and he wrenches his mother's wedding ring, a useless amulet before demonic wrath, from the baron's finger. When the boy returns to the same spot with his mother, the corpse is gone. The faint footprints in the sand may suggest that fate, guised as the baron's negro companion, whisked its servant away.

The boy continues to inquire about the mysterious pair but gleans nothing more. His dream never recurs. However, when he dozes, he hears terrible shrieks and mournful complaints which rend his heart. Whether they are the wails of men or the cries of birds, he does not know. The wild hurricane indicates the wreckage and ruin which fate may wreak upon him. The menacing sea suggests the supernatural threatening to swell again and swoop down upon man, like the seagulls diving into the swirling foam. Sadness pervades the boy's soul as he wonders why ordinary people like him should be caught in the frightening net of fate.

Turgenev's most compelling study of the marvelous is, perhaps, The Song of Triumphant Love, written in 1881. Here he suggests the continuous transition from the rational to the irrational through the medium of music. He combines all the supernatural elements from his previous stories into this one. The reader is exposed to dreams, charms, potions, hypnotism, magnetism, madness, and destruction. How bewildered one reader was by the exotic story, may be indicated in a letter Turgenev wrote to Annenkov:

By the way, imagine: a Russian lady has most seriously assured me that in Russia they have guessed the significance of "The Song of Triumphant Love": Valeriia is Russia; Fabius is the government; Mucius who fertilizes Russia even though he perishes, is nihilism, and the mute Malayan is the Russian muzhik (also mute), who calls nihilism back to life!! What an unexpected allegory?! Like M. Jourdain [in Molière's Bourgeois Gentilhomme] qui parlait en prose sans le savoir [who spoke prose without being aware of it], I created all this profundity without suspecting it myself!⁷⁴

Turgenev based his story upon an old Italian manuscript. The opening line taken from Schiller--"dare to dream and to err"--contrasts with the words written almost twenty years ago in Enough--"be done with dreaming and striving." Turgenev apparently resumed courage to continue his struggle for ultimate knowledge despite all the disappointments and disillusionments involved.

In The Song of Triumphant Love, a painter named Fabius and a musician named Mucius seek the hand of Valeria, a modest, compassionate young girl with a beautiful voice. Her mother, reminiscent of Madame Eltzov in Faust, secretly prefers Fabius for her daughter's husband. Mucius immediately departs for the Orient, returning to Italy only when all traces of his passion for Valeria have disappeared. Mucius's face seems darker and more impassive than before. His adventures in countries with magical names increase the mystery surrounding him. His sumptuous rugs, jewelled platters, musky perfumes, and spices fascinate Valeria even though she finds their usefulness incomprehensible. Mucius enchants her with exotic tricks, wines, and melodies from the Far East. He places a marvelous pearl necklace around her neck, which adheres to her skin with a strange warmth. Valeria wonders if Mucius is a magician. As he intently gazes at her, she becomes drowsy as though sinking under his influence.

⁷⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 342.

Unable to sleep, Valeria envisions herself in an ornate Oriental room, which Mucius enters by means of a secret door. Her nightmare recalls the real episode experienced by the young woman in The Dream. The next morning Valeria learns that Mucius also had a vision. It was identical to hers. As Valeria broods in the garden, her inexplicable link with the musician is emphasized by the marble statue of a satyr, smiling maliciously and holding a reed-pipe. Her being seems defiled by its evilness. When Fabius attempts to complete his portrait of Valeria as St. Cecilia, he discovers that her beatific expression is gone.

Valeria continues to have dreadful visions. At last she seeks advice from a priest. He feels that Mucius's travels to unchristian lands have infected him with black magic and that his demonic tunes have upset Valeria's imagination. The reader may recall Vera in Faust, whose peace of mind was disturbed by poetry reading. The priest then tells Fabius to banish the musician from Fererra in order to protect Valeria from further harm. That night Fabius witnesses his wife in a somnambulistic state straining to meet Mucius in the garden. Enraged, he stabs the musician whose shriek of anguish is echoed by Valeria. When she awakens, she reacts like a person rescued from inevitable disaster. Fabius hesitantly goes to see whether his former friend is dead. To his utter amazement, he discovers the Malayan companion reviving Mucius through satanic mystical rites in a room exactly like the one in Valeria's nightmare. The Malayan seems to play the same role as the negro in The Dream. Whether fate protects or destroys its agent, Fabius cannot determine.

After Mucius and the Malayan depart, the couple hope to resume their normal life. Valeria tosses away her necklace as though freeing herself from the influence of that malicious power in the world. But one

day she plays Mucius's fateful melody on her piano. Valeria still lies in the invisible grip of the supernatural, and perhaps her fate will resemble that of Vera in Faust.

These later ghostly tales illustrate Turgenev's serious study of the supernatural, which taints the life of ordinary beings. Conscientiously relying upon a detached narrator, Turgenev intends to present his work as objectively as possible. Yet his magnetic treatment of the irrational may suggest his subconscious conviction of its existence. Perhaps consideration of three of Turgenev's more subjective writings would reveal his unspoken wish to solve the puzzle of life.

CHAPTER IV

A MYSTICAL TRILOGY

Turgenev often implied that his stories were fragments from his biography. One may then conclude like Marc Slonim that "all the works of this objective realist were highly subjective and unraveled many conflicts that had tormented him since his early youth."⁷⁵ Turgenev's own experiences of evilness and suffering caused him to wonder about the probable existence of a misanthropic God, governing the universe. Seeking an answer to the enigma of life, Turgenev repeatedly tried to throw open the door which leads man into the unknown. His stories, Three Meetings, Phantoms, and Clara Milich, written over a span of thirty years, suggest a mystical trilogy tracing his own mystical quest from beginning to end. To introduce the supernatural, Turgenev again relies upon the media of music and poetry.

An Italian aria in Three Meetings stirs the imagination of a young man and transports him into the realms of the unknown. The tale which appeared in 1851 baffled many critics. Vengerov called it an art for art's sake extravagance and commented:

There can be no discussion about any guiding idea. To speak figuratively, it is a fragrant flower whose perfume delights the reader but offers him no other substantial qualities. Its whole point is in its craftsmanship, and in paraphrase it loses all its charm.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Slonim, The Epic of Russian Literature, p. 264.

⁷⁶V. A. Zelinskii, Sobranie kriticheskikh materialov dlia izucheniia proizvedenii I. S. Turgeneva (Moskva, 1884), Pt. I, 88. (Hereinafter referred to as Sobranie kriticheskikh materialov.) Whenever the translation as here is mine, it will always be indicated in the footnote.

Annenkov regarded the story as an inept piece of narration and said:

Turgenev, such a successful master of the narrative form in the first person, was bound to show its weak points as well. They have appeared in "Three Meetings" with so much pride, independence, and coquetry that they have swallowed up the subject-matter. There are several brilliant pages in the story, but its fantastic ostentatious manner seems to be directed solely towards illuminating the person of the narrator in the most favourable light. . . . After the story, "Three Meetings," the narrative form had been completely exhausted by the author, who was scarcely able to come back to it.⁷⁷

However, these severe critics did not perhaps examine the story very well, for in fact Three Meetings marvelously depicts Turgenev's positivistic attitudes in a highly symbolic framework.

The story, based upon Turgenev's stay in Sorrento, is very simple. A young man, encountering a beautiful lady in Italy, meets her again in Russia under strange circumstances. He inquires about her in Moscow and finally finds her in St. Petersburg, only to let her vanish from his life as mysteriously as she came.

Turgenev's magic pen creates an atmosphere imbued with the supernatural. At the first meeting in Sorrento, the evening pulsates with scintillating stars and streaming moonbeams; the air is warm and sweet with the fragrance of lime-trees. Enchanted, the young man catches the strains of a tender song floating from a dimly-lit house. Suddenly the window-blinds fly open, and a graceful woman, dressed in white, stretches her arms towards the garden. Sighing faintly, she then disappears into the darkness of her room. The young man, startled by the phantasmal occurrence, stands in a daze, departing only when a man slips into the house through a secret entrance. Two years later, the young man has an identical experience in Glinnoe. Again the atmosphere is suffused with silvery

⁷⁷Zelinskii, Sobranie kriticheskikh materialov, Pt. I, 88. Translation here is mine.

moonlight. The stars gleam tranquilly at the earth while the air quivers and curls into luminous mist. Enveloped by the drowsy silence of nature, the young man senses that something extraordinary will happen. As he stands motionless in the garden of a half-darkened house, he unexpectedly hears a familiar voice singing. Presently his unknown beauty appears at the window. Serene, pensive, and passionate, she disappears as quickly as before. The young man, thoroughly amazed, wonders if he is dreaming. Regaining his composure, he approaches the manor but discovers nothing unusual about it. While returning home, he observes a man on horseback leaving the courtyard. The element of mystery heightens as the young man can learn nothing from the house serf, Lukianych, or from the village peasants except that two elderly sisters have come for a brief stay in the country. Perplexed, he vows to find out who the unknown lady is. When he sees his beauty riding with her companion in the forest the next day, he is at least convinced of their reality. Like the lad in The Dream, he uses this encounter as the first step towards solving a supposedly supernatural occurrence. He approaches the ancient manor and, learning that the sisters have just left for Moscow, he persuades the servant to let him inspect every room in the house. Decrepit and dusty, they emit ghostly vibrations. As the young man lifts the warped piano lid and touches the discoloured keys, a shrill, hissing sound rings out as if protesting his audacity and curiosity. He insists that Lukianych unlock the store-room door and let him observe its musty confines. Curiosity compels him to return a week later to the mysterious manor which, like Lukianych, smirks, seeming to say that no amount of exploration will reveal its secrets. The young man wants to know where Lukianych is. According to the servant's nephew, he was trapped and killed by an evil power in the store-room. On

that dreadful night, the door opened of its own accord; a scratching noise resounded from the room's gloomy depths and a harsh voice called the serf's name. Perhaps fate punished Lukianych for revealing its domains to mortal eyes. But, according to the court, the serf lost his mind and strangled himself.

Hastily departing from that strange house, the young man travels to Moscow where a chance conversation with the two elderly sisters convinces him that someone else had been in Glinnoe. When he accidentally meets the unknown beauty in St. Petersburg, he feels that a marvelous dream has become a reality. Pretending to be some mysterious omniscient being, he finally admits that he knows nothing about the beauty. Declaring that she is not at all unusual, she tells him about the lover who secretly courted her in the country several years ago and then forsook her. Catching sight of her former lover at the masked ball, she firmly forbids the young man to pursue her any further, and she disappears through the doorway. He believes that, by continuing his inquiries, he could probably learn everything about the unknown beauty. However, he is content to leave her simply as a dream-vision. Like Turgenev, he resembles the person who is reluctant to put the last piece of a puzzle together because, having guessed the design, he wishes some element of mystery to remain.

Turgenev, perhaps, considers the elusive woman as a symbol of that unknown in life, which one may glimpse and explain only to a certain degree. The young man's tortuous dream probably represents Turgenev's own mystical experience. Envisioning the phantasmal woman floating and merging with the golden threads of the sun, the source of all truth, the young man tries to follow her but he cannot because he has no wings. Raving like a mad-

man, he accuses the sun of being a spider, a Christian symbol for the devil and death. Then the young man pictures himself hurrying along a mountain path, straining towards an indescribable happiness; however, cliffs loom before him and prevent his onward progression. He frantically searches for openings as the sweet voice of his beauty repeatedly calls him, but Lukianych bars each passageway, refusing to let him reach his Dulcinea. In the guise of Don Quixote, the servant pierces the young man, or rather Turgenev, through the heart with a lance for attempting to find the Ideal. As he lies mortally wounded, the beauty approaches him, laughs disdainfully, and drips hot oil from her lamp onto his bleeding heart. She mocks the errant young man, who foolishly tried to accompany her. Before awakening, he calls her Psyche, a figure who, in Christian tradition, signifies the purification of the soul through suffering before ultimate unification with its divine source.⁷⁸

That horrifying dream seems to premonish Turgenev's dismay at being denied the knowledge of life's mysteries. It may also forebode his fear that, perhaps, nothing but the darkness, the viciousness, and the destruction, which the young man glimpsed in the fatal store-room, awaits him. The nightmare also predicts Turgenev's later portrayal of the incomprehensible female phantom as a predatory vampire. He expresses his disillusionment with the ideal in a letter, written four years after the appearance of Three Meetings:

When I look back at my past life, it seems that I have done nothing more than pursue trifles. Don Quixote, at least, believed in the beauty of his Dulcinea, but the Don Quixotes of our times realize that their Dulcinea is an ugly hag and keep running after her anyhow.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Jobes, Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Symbols, II, 1299.

⁷⁹Turgenev's Letters, p. 75.

Though Turgenev suspected the vileness of his Dulcinea and the futility of pursuing her, he, nevertheless, courageously depicted their second meeting in a story named Phantoms. Written in 1863 and based upon an overpowering dream, which occurred to Turgenev in 1849 in Courtevenal, it suggests the author's increasingly pessimistic view about ever grasping the enigma of life.

Turgenev experienced much distress and dissatisfaction with Phantoms. Technical problems plus his own qualms about the worth of the story continually hampered and delayed its public appearance. Only with a great deal of persuasion did Turgenev finally submit Phantoms for publication in 1864. To the author's dismay, Dostoevsky later parodied it in The Possessed. Though Dostoevsky had praised the ghostly tale in front of Turgenev, he had scoffed at it behind his back, writing in 1863: "There is much rubbish in it, something nasty, sickly, senile, impotent, and so without faith--in a word, the whole Turgenev, with all his convictions--but the poetry will make up for a lot."⁸⁰ Other literary critics, seeking for interpretations, abused Turgenev's story even more. The author hastily sent a letter to Botkin in 1863 which stated that the work was not at all allegorical. He added that: ". . . I myself understand Ellis as little as you do. It is a series of mentally dissolving views, provoked by the transitional and genuinely ponderous and obscure state of my I."⁸¹ In the preface to Dostoevsky's 1864 edition, he emphasized:

Every true work of art must speak for itself and stand on its own feet and therefore needs no preliminary explanations and interpretations. As I do not believe, however, that Phantoms belongs to that kind of work, I should like to ask the reader, who perhaps has a right to expect something more serious from me, not to look for any allegory or hidden

⁸⁰Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age, p. 269.

⁸¹Turgenev's Letters, p. 150.

meaning in the phantasy I am offering him, but simply to regard it as a series of pictures which are only superficially connected with one another.⁸²

Corresponding with the English translator and critic, W. R. Ralston in 1877, Turgenev explained that the title Dream would not do for Phantoms, which expressed ". . . no malaise, the French desire for rapprochement (French desire for touching)---something perhaps a bit shocking (a rather scandalous matter)."⁸³ It merely attempted to resolve a physiological problem the author had himself experienced.⁸⁴

Turgenev's terrifying tale portrays a young man whisked through the night over Italy, France, Germany, and Russia by a vampirical ghost called Ellis. She shows him sights invisible to the ordinary mortal's eye. Each flight exhausts and repels the young man, who seems to recognize but not identify his mysterious companion. Her violent death plagues him until, reaching no conclusions, he tries to dismiss the incredible adventure from his thoughts.

That tortuous journey, whether real or imaginary the young man cannot determine, resembles the mystical flight described in Three Meetings. However, the feeling of anguish and despair over the inexplicability of life is much more potent. The vulgarity and the futility of life witnessed by the young man, or perhaps Turgenev, overwhelms him, crushing his striving for idealism and human dignity. Turgenev vehemently expresses his disgust for humanity and in particular for himself. Even nature repels him because it conceals that vicious, destructive, unworldly force which victimizes and annihilates man.

⁸²Magarshack, Turgenev: A Life, p. 225.

⁸³Turgenev's Letters, pp. 301-02.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 302.

The period from 1863 to 1871 was a particularly pessimistic one for Turgenev. He felt extremely useless, old, and ill. Yet, his feelings of contempt and aversion for earthly life were simply an intensification of those experienced much earlier. In 1847 Turgenev already spoke of ". . . a force of evil so powerful and so audacious that no resistance to it is possible . . ."---the essence of Phantoms' theme.⁸⁵ In 1848 he told Pauline Viardot about his fear of nature, which hid brutality behind beauty.⁸⁶ That anxiety possibly stemmed from Feuerbach ". . . who had helped to weaken the attraction that the transcendental had held for him in his youth, . . .[and] confirmed him in his view of Nature as a force wholly indifferent to man's concerns and aspirations, indeed, in its blind ruthlessness, hostile to them."⁸⁷ Turgenev began to wonder whether man's soul was "a feeble radiance that ancient night eternally seeks to swallow"---a thought echoed throughout Phantoms.⁸⁸ Turgenev also expressed to Madame Viardot in 1848 his impotence to comprehend that dark, immutable force blanketed by the sky. The young man in Phantoms reverberates Turgenev's complaint of being chained to the earth and being unable to soar like a bird towards the goal of knowledge. Phantoms also seems to reflect the author's plaint of man's injustice to man. After the abortive uprising in Paris, he condemned rulers, armies, and governments, exclaiming to Madame Viardot in 1849 that ". . . this hideous phantom, which, hollow, stupid, incapable of producing anything with the word Order in its mouth, a sword in

⁸⁵Wilson, "Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop," Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences, p. 11.

⁸⁶Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age, p. 104.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

one hand and gold in the other, is crushing us all under its iron heel."⁸⁹ His horror of violence and destruction figures prominently in his ghostly tale, particularly where the young man summons the spectres of Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Stenka Razin. In a letter sent to Madame Viardot that same year, Turgenev wrote: "When one thinks of what bad and useless things there are in the world--cholera, hailstorms, kings, soldiers, etc., etc'--would God be a misanthrope?"⁹⁰ His consternation, expressed in Enough, over the presence of an invisible ruthless force stalking the earth reaches its peak in Phantoms.

Turgenev again turns to nature to illustrate the brutality and destruction threatening man. As the young adventurer sets out to meet Ellis near an ancient oak tree split by lightning, he feels enveloped in an atmosphere tainted with a strange, deathlike tranquillity. The whole sky turns crimson, and lifeless leaves hang from stiff trees. The wind which suddenly snuffs out the candle in the young man's room perhaps forebodes the quick extinguishing of his life. As the couple glide above the earth, the black forest bristles and rustles like some menacing, growling beast. When the pair approach the Isle of Wight, thick, smoky clouds crowd together like a herd of monsters while, below, the icy sea rages and smashes against the looming cliffs. Over Rome, the young man views an isolated monument crumbling under strong, entwining black ivy. The deadly power of nature horrifies him, and, as he entrusts himself to Ellis, he feels as though he is being hurtled towards a distant waterfall.

Though the young man gradually loses his fear of the phantom, he

⁸⁹Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age, p. 103.

⁹⁰Turgenev's Letters, pp. 31-32.

still mistrusts her. He wonders whether she is real or not. At first, Ellis seemed to materialize from moonbeams but, later, she seemed to be made of flesh and blood. Her refusal to disclose her identity disturbs him. Vaguely pointing to the dark, immense sky, she quickly covers the young man's eyes with her misty veil just as he is about to grasp her meaning. Ellis's serpentine gaze, scornful laughter, and nocturnal visitations increase his suspicions of a link between the phantom and the malicious power, exposing its wrath through nature. Wanting to abandon his dangerous experiment, the young man realizes that it is too late. When Ellis first carried him off into the night, he suddenly felt trapped by a satanic emissary. Her indifferent declarations of love and her lips, stinging him like a leech, disconcert him. When the young man's housekeeper confirms his disappearance each night and points out his pallid complexion, he wonders if Ellis is actually draining away his blood and strength. Yet the phantom promises him no harm. Her grief-stricken face, her yearning for happiness, and her fear of someone guarding her existence rouse his sympathy.

One evening Ellis takes the young man to Isola Bella, Lago Maggiore. The intoxicating fragrance of orange blossoms, the quivering golden stars, and the rustling silvery forest, laced with the sweet singing of a young woman, recalls a similar setting in Three Meetings. The young man again falls into a trance. He yearns to speak to the unknown beauty, radiating sublime happiness as she sits smilingly by the window-ledge. When he attempts to join her in that marvelous house, Ellis sharply strikes him and whirls him away from the comforting strains of the Italian aria. Like Lukianych in Three Meetings, she jealously prevents the young man from attaining his Dulcinea. Like the house-serf, Ellis is overtaken by the

malevolent, yellowish mass of fate, undulating like a serpent through the black sky, intent on annihilating its servant. Hurtling to the ground, Ellis clings to the young man for a moment, then disappears in a crimson foam.

The adventurer dazedly shudders at death's vicious onslaught. Pondering for a long time over Ellis's motives and destiny, he at last decides that neither science nor religion can explain whether she was a vision or a vampire. Perhaps his weakened, anaemic condition and his anguish at the thought of annihilation suggest the latter. Afraid of being called a madman, he tells no one about his horrifying journey through space.

As in Three Meetings, Turgenev reveals here his positivistic outlook. His work again implies that the search for an answer to the riddle of life is futile. He clearly formulated that thought to Tolstoy in a letter, written in 1857:

[Philosophical] systems are valued only by those who do not have their hands on the entire truth and wish to grab it by the tail; a system is just like the tail of the truth--but the truth is like a lizard; it leaves its tail in your hand and runs away; it knows it will shortly grow another one.⁹¹

This metaphor, further developed in Phantoms and continued in Clara Milich, suggests Turgenev's underlying message both to the reader and to himself.

Towards the end of his life, Turgenev became less sad and less disillusioned. He confided to Tolstoy that a long life always teaches one not to doubt everything.⁹² Suspecting that something, which he could not yet define, superceded the emptiness of earthly life, he wrote: "the word

⁹¹Turgenev's Letters, p. xiv.

⁹²Ibid., p. 351.

'death' alone does not express that something completely--and hence the turning to God, together with a longing for the forbidden green meadows."⁹³ Turgenev, preparing for death and still seeking knowledge about the world beyond the grave, embarked upon his third and final mystical quest with the hope of finding the answer previously denied to him in Three Meetings and Phantoms. However, not wishing any readers or critics to think that he actually believed in such spiritual adventures, Turgenev changed the title of his last ghostly tale from After Death to Clara Milich.

The plot evolved from Josephina Antonovna Polonsky's description of a male acquaintance who passionately fell in love with a Russian actress after she committed suicide. Though the young scientist recovered his senses and abandoned his spectral sweetheart for a corporeal bride, Turgenev found the psychological fact fascinating. He remarked that "one could create a semi-fantastical story about it in the style of Edgar [Allan] Poe."⁹⁴

The tale, which eventually appeared in 1882, portrays an introspective idealistic young man named Aratov whose life was disrupted by an ungovernable, passionate girl. Seemingly distraught by his indifference to their tryst and to her declarations of love, she kills herself by drinking a vial of poison. Guilt-stricken, Aratov becomes obsessed by the memory of the budding actress and, after falling into a delirium, dies believing that he will meet her beyond the grave.

Aratov seems to resemble Turgenev more closely than those young men in the two preceding stories. Like the author, he inherited a predilection for the supernatural from his father, reputed to be a magician.

⁹³Turgenev's Letters, p. 108.

⁹⁴Ivan Turgenev, Pis'ma (13 vols.; Leningrad, 1961-68), XIII, Pt. I, 168. Translation here is mine.

Possessing Turgenev's curiosity about the world rarely glimpsed by man, Aratov wishes to explore it through the medium of science, not of religion, or superstition. He also wants to climb as high as possible into the realms of the supernatural. Though attracted by the ideal, he feels more captivated by the malevolent unknown. Like the author, Aratov has a sensitive, nervous temperament and a tendency to dream. He also considers Clara a fascinating psychological puzzle.

When Aratov first views Clara Milich as a living woman, her features perhaps resembling those of Pauline Viardot, repel him. Swarthy, stocky, and black-haired, she is not the ideal beauty of his imagination. At the recital, Aratov becomes inexplicably agitated when she directs the words from her song and her poem, which plead for a meeting and for an understanding, towards him. The next day, he receives an anonymous note but guesses that it comes from Clara. Hesitating like the young man wooed by Ellis in Phantoms, he finally goes with apprehension in his heart to the tryst. Clara quietly emerges, her pale face muffled behind a thick, trailing veil. Her sorrowful expression and tear-filled eyes rouse the young man's compassion. But, when she realizes that her words mean nothing to him, her face flushes maliciously and she disappears with a scornful laugh. Aratov considers her strange behaviour befitting for an amateur actress. Yet, her sudden suicide, reported in the newspaper, shocks him. Unlike Teglev in Knock, Knock, Knock he determines to find out whether the fatal poisoning is fact or fantasy. He inquires after Clara as persistently as the young man after his unknown beauty in Three Meetings.

Aratov learns that Clara possessed demonic pride. Hot-tempered and self-willed, she bit when angered. She believed in Fate but not in God. Through dreams, she premonished the unhappy existence waiting for

her and she resolved to die rather than live not as she wanted. Clara dramatically carried out her decision when performing in Ostrovsky's play "Live as You Can" (Nye tak zhivi, kak khochetsia). Like the young man in Faust, Aratoff does not think himself to blame for the young woman's death. She already seemed inexplicably linked with some unknown power, which subtly expressed itself in her behaviour and appearance. As Aratov gazes at Clara's portrait, he observes her hair coiled like a serpent and recalls that, before dying, she writhed and writhed like a snake. He remembers her somnambulistic movements at the literary gathering as though she were hypnotized, like Valeria in The Song of Triumphant Love, by an unseen menacing force. But Anna reminds him that, in spite of her sister's defects, she still strived towards idealism and purity. Clara's duality of goodness and evilness perplexes him. Her fragmentary diary does not help him to understand her.

Though Aratov distrusted Clara from their first meeting, he determines to communicate with her again. Edmund Wilson draws an interesting parallel between Turgenev's young man and Gogol's philosopher in Viy. He writes that ". . . Gogol's hero arouses more sympathy, puts up a better fight than Turgenev's, who is actually, like Sanin in The Torrents, more attracted than frightened by the vampire."⁹⁵ Aratov suspects Clara's hostility towards him. After their tryst in the garden, he feels something dark and hard lodging in his heart. Later he has an ominous nightmare resembling the tortuous dream in Three Meetings. Aratov envisions Clara, decked in roses, laughing and beckoning him to follow her and learn

⁹⁵Wilson, "Turgenev and the Life-Giving Drop," Turgenev's Literary Reminiscences, p. 54.

her identity. Pursuing the veiled phantom along a rocky path, he finds his way blocked by a tombstone, and she abandons him, paralyzed on the ground. Awakening, the young man feels embraced by a fearful power. It menaces Aratov in another dream in which he owns a house, portending disaster behind its sumptuous facade. The grimacing servant suggests Lukjanych who was required in Three Meetings to give up his life to an evil power. Aratov's previous sensation of being a fish, drawn on a line along the bottom of the sea by a fisherman, develops in the dream as Death waiting in a boat for his passengers.

But Aratov banishes his fear of death's sting for he feels that, if Clara's spirit materializes, he will have proof of immortality and eternity. As he waits for her visitation, he becomes irritated by the same cat and mouse game which Ellis played in Phantoms. At last he hears Clara whispering and, in exorcising tones, declares his love for her. She briefly appears, smiles triumphantly, and coldly kisses him. Aratov, overjoyed, realizes that Clara came to claim him and he readily gives up his soul. The final expression of rapture on his face contrasts with those of bewilderment in Three Meetings and anguish in Phantoms.

But, like the previous young men, Aratov does not really know whether his apparition is a vision or a vampire. Turgenev again indicates the latter, for Clara's deed destines her to return to the earthly world as a demonic vampire, whose final fate may resemble that of Ellis--annihilation, not immortality. Aratov's pallid face and feeble body suggest the sucking away of his life's blood. His cry for help when Clara appears and his aunt's rapid sprinkling of holy water indicates that the phantom was more malevolent than beneficent.

If Aratov was mistaken in his hope for immortality, Turgenev does

not conclusively say. He still clings to the positivistic views in his earlier tales and the question of life after death remains unanswered. He explains in 1882 to Maria Savina: "there my imagination halts respectfully. Is it because what follows must be kept secret or because there is nothing to keep secret?"⁹⁶

Perhaps the flowers associated with the phantoms in Turgenev's trilogy--the scarlet poppy in Three Meetings, the water-lily in Phantoms, and the rose in Clara Milich--may reveal most clearly Turgenev's thoughts about the mystical quest. The author

. . . had a particular fondness for pulling off the petals of a rosebud and trying to discover the core of it. It always irritated him to find that the innermost sheaths were so thin and delicate that he could not tear them off. Perhaps this practice taught the novelist to content himself with the exquisite epidermis of reality, to draw, as George Moore said of him, only the skin from his subject.⁹⁷

Turgenev acknowledged in accordance with his positivistic conception that the enigma which perturbed him resisted ultimate analysis. Before dying in Bougival in 1883, he briefly gazed at one of his favourite landscapes by Théodore Rousseau (depicting an old oak tree and a hoary old man, both bent and weathered by the harshness of past winters), perhaps, because it best illustrated the lesson of resignation to the laws of life.⁹⁸

⁹⁶Yarmolinsky, Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age, p. 377.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 10.

⁹⁸Vogüé, The Russian Novel, p. 200.

CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND OF TURGENEV'S PESSIMISM

Turgenev never solved the mystery of life. Neither scientific fact nor religious faith offered him conclusive evidence about the final fate of man. Was it immortality or was it annihilation? Though Turgenev's positivistic outlook permitted either possibility, his private life and experiences with the invisible, implacable force, lurking in the world, pushed him towards the pessimistic alternative.

Turgenev was innately melancholy. After writing Faust in 1856, he bid farewell to his dream of so-called happiness. To Countess Maria Tolstoy's suggestion that the story revealed the deep sadness underlying his equanimity, Turgenev replied in 1857:

What you say about the other man within me is completely true, but you may not know the reason for this duality. I too shall be frank with you. You see, I have been finding it bitter to grow old without having known complete happiness, and without having built myself a peaceful nest.⁹⁹

Writing to Count Lev Tolstoy in 1858, Turgenev described more fully the feeling of misery sweeping through him. He exclaimed:

Oh, my dear Tolstoy, if you knew how difficult I find things and how sad I am! Take a lesson from me: do not let life slip through your fingers I do not know how you should act to avoid falling into such a misfortune; perhaps you are not destined to fall into that misfortune. At least accept my sincere wishes for sound happiness and a sound life. This is wished to you by a person who is profoundly and deservedly unhappy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Turgenev's Letters, p. 86.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 99.

However, Turgenev's most poignant letters during this despondent period from 1856 to 1864 were written to Countess Elizaveta Lambert. Of particular importance is the one sent from Courtevenal in 1859 in the middle of July. Turgenev despairingly described his dead soul. He explained to his correspondent that

what has died within me is not my emotions, no, but the opportunity to satisfy them. I look at my happiness as I look at my youth--as someone else's that is there--and between the here and the there is an abyss that nothing can ever fill.¹⁰¹

He concluded by saying that "the only thing left for a person to do is to let himself be carried on the waves of life for the time being, and think about port after he has found a sweet and dear comrade . . . a comrade in emotions, in ideas, and, the main thing, in attitude . . . to hold his hand firmly and float together."¹⁰² Turgenev later expressed that very thought in Phantoms where a young man joins hands with Ellis and floats above the world with her, surveying the human anthills and the insatiable hunger of nature. Another letter, written in October of the same year, discussed the tragic sentence of death imposed upon mankind.¹⁰³ In January of 1861, the Russian writer told Madame Lambert about the horror of experiencing death within himself. Yet he declared that occurrence as

. . . perhaps, one of the most indubitable proofs of the immortality of the soul. Here I am, dead, and for all that, I am alive and perhaps have even become better and purer.¹⁰⁴

Turgenev then repeated the question--"What next?"--which he continually

¹⁰¹Turgenev's Letters, p. 105.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 114.

asked throughout his ghostly tales.¹⁰⁵

As Turgenev's hopes and wishes in life remained unsatisfied, the bitterness and silent suffering, which had infiltrated his soul over the years, found utterance in 1864 in Enough. The most personal of all Turgenev's works, it publicly revealed his convictions concerning life, which were never to change during the course of his literary career. In harmony with the thoughts of his correspondence, particularly from 1859 to 1861, Turgenev stressed the ruthlessness of fate as it leads unsuspecting man towards an unknown and incomprehensible end. Because the fragments of truth available to man negate his aspirations, he must renounce everything and recognize his uselessness and insignificance before the power ruling the universe. Turgenev turned to Shakespeare's "Macbeth" where he found similar views on the foolishness and the meaninglessness of life. Turgenev exclaimed:

I have cited the verses from "Macbeth," and those witches, phantoms, visions have recurred to my mind. . . . Alas! it is not visions, not fantastic, subterranean powers that are terrible; the creations of Hoffmann are not dreadful, under whatsoever form they may present themselves. . . . The terrible thing is that there is nothing terrible, that the very substance of life itself is petty, uninteresting--and insipid to beggary.¹⁰⁶

Once man is permeated with this consciousness, Turgenev declared, he can never enjoy the fruits of happiness. Life loses its charm because of its momentariness. Man lives, loves, and hopes, then vanishes into a silent twilight zone. That thought forms the theme for all Turgenev's ghostly tales. Even man's art disappears from the world, for nature does not tolerate the immortality of anything except itself. Nature makes no ex-

¹⁰⁵Turgenev's Letters, p. 114.

¹⁰⁶The Novels and Stories by Ivan Turgénieff, trans. by Isabel F. Hapgood, XII, 314.

ceptions; "everything which exists in her bosom has arisen only for the benefit of another and must, in due time, make way for that other--she creates by destroying, and it is a matter of perfect indifference to her what she creates, what she destroys, if only life be not extirpated, if only death do not lose its rights. . . ." ¹⁰⁷ Turgenev wondered how an artist could compromise with such a deaf, dumb, blind force which perpetuated itself by devouring everything on earth. That art could perish, robbed Turgenev of his hope and faith in transcendental beneficence. Life's contradictions, which puzzled all men, could only be solved through death, but the answers were not transmittible to the living.

The thoughts which Turgenev expressed in Enough and embodied in all his ghostly tales were the fruit of those thoughts germinating within him as early as 1847. However, they may have also developed from the pessimistic views of Arthur Schopenhauer, whose books Turgenev recommended to Herzen in 1862.

Several Soviet critics have already cautiously mentioned the link between the German philosopher and the Russian writer. ¹⁰⁸ L. V. Pumpianskii, for example, suggests that Schopenhauer's philosophy influenced Turgenev's writings during the 1860's. M. K. Kleman notes that the two stories, Phantoms, and Enough, clearly reflect the moods and thoughts of Schopenhauer. A little later, M. K. Azadovskii, agreeing with Pumpianskii's observations, remarks that Turgenev approached Schopenhauer not as a student

¹⁰⁷The Novels and Stories of Ivan Turgénieff, trans. by Isabel F. Hapsgood, XII, 318.

¹⁰⁸Ida Vinnikova, I. S. Turgenev v shestidesiatye gody: Ocherki i nabliudeniia (Suratov, 1965), pp. 53-55.

but as a man who has already experienced and meditated upon similar problems. A. Walicki also states that Turgenev never really studied Schopenhauer but only examined those thoughts which resembled his own. The Polish scholar, to substantiate his claim, refers to the German philosopher's attitude toward nature, man, and the tragedy of life. However, A. Walicki, according to I. Vinnikova, fails to point out several major distinctions between the outlooks of the two men. She further comments that the theory of "schopenhauerism" in Turgenev has received inadequate attention. Some critics like G. A. Bialy completely avoid the issue while others like S. M. Petrov do not venture beyond a passing comment. No one researcher, I. Vinnokova asserts, has yet tackled the problem of defining the relationship between the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the world outlook of Turgenev.

Schopenhauer became popular in Russia during the 1860's as his pessimism harmonized with the general feeling of bitterness about the political reaction and the lethargic social movement in the pre-reform years. His philosophy attracted Turgenev as well as Tolstoy and Fet, both of whom translated the works of the German philosopher. Turgenev's letters written to Countess Lambert in 1859, his subjective story, Enough, and his ghostly tales, particularly Phantoms, reflect a probable predilection for the views of the German thinker.

Schopenhauer, who lived from 1788 to 1860, had a temperament similar to that of Turgenev's. Like the Russian writer, he wished to open the door of revelation and learn life's secret. He too rejected the strictly scientific approach which only explained the shell and not the kernel of life. Schopenhauer vigorously combatted the materialists who refused to recognize the presence of the irrational or the supernatural. At the same

time, he fought the idealists who placed intellect at the centre of the universe and sublimated phenomena into a scheme of the divine. Schopenhauer maintained that no supreme mind guided the cosmos, only the blind, ruthless, irrational force which he termed the will. Though Turgenev had asserted in 1849 that the world was no meditated work, he did not brazenly campaign against science or religion. Nor did he become as involved with mysticism as the German philosopher, who tried to solve the enigma of life through Buddhism. Turgenev never abandoned his positivistic attitude, although he valued clairvoyance, telepathy, magic, magnetism, hypnotism, dreams, and apparitions just as much as Schopenhauer. Such occurrences afforded fleeting glimpses of that unknown power permeating all matter.

Turgenev also considered the will paramount to the intellect or, as he wrote Countess Maria Tolstoy in 1857, the heart to the head. Schopenhauer's mysticism led him to the conclusion that the individual will was united to the universal will. Though the one conflicted with the other on earth, man necessarily submitted to the decrees of fate because of his inevitable mortality. Hence the greater man's temporal willing, the greater his suffering. To lessen his suffering, he must weaken his will, deny his desires, and therefore lose all hope for happiness. Such was the lesson Madame Eltzov tried to teach her daughter in Turgenev's Faust. With the abolition of the will, according to Schopenhauer, came the abolition of the idea and the world. Nothingness then awaited man, precisely the fear which Turgenev expressed in Phantoms and Clara Milich. Schopenhauer's Eastern mysticism also recalls the Oriental mysteries in The Song of Triumphant Love.

To the German philosopher, life signified nothing. Death insured that every individual became "shipwrecked at the end," a metaphor which

suggests the terrible scene off the Isle of Wight in Phantoms. Schopenhauer, perhaps for personal reasons, did not permit suicide as an escape from the disappointments and the disillusionments of life. Two of Turgenev's people, Teglev in Knock, Knock, Knock and Clara in Clara Milich, decided to kill themselves. Suicide according to the German philosopher, did not free anyone from his suffering, which continued more intensely after death. Turgenev, however, did not say what lay in store for man beyond the grave.

Schopenhauer maintained that man must inexplicably eke out his futile existence until the conquest of death. He may try to understand his plight but he will never succeed in obtaining conclusive answers to his questions. With the increase of knowledge came the increase of suffering as man realized the impossibility of solving the contradiction of life. The pessimistic viewpoint sharply contrasted with the optimistic outlook of the rationalistic systems in Turgenev's day. Thus, Turgenev, at the risk of being unfashionable, described young men in Three Meetings, Phantoms, and Clara Milich who received no replies to their inquiries about the meaning of life. The lack of knowledge intensified their anxiety and their despair in the world. Turgenev suspected rather than believed as Schopenhauer did that the universal will projected evilness. The ruthlessness of nature, reaching its peak of horror in Phantoms, only increased Turgenev's apprehensions that behind the veil of illusion lay a demonic, not a divine power, trapping man in the fatal web of life. Again Turgenev suspected rather than believed that suffering perpetuated itself, a fact which the German philosopher blamed in part on women and their role of procreation. Such a thought may help explain the Russian writer's portrayal of vampiric females.

Schopenhauer preached the gospel of resignation and asceticism, a message which echoes throughout Turgenev's ghostly tales, particularly Faust. Art and philosophy offered man temporary solace from the senseless and vicious onslaught of the malaise governing the universe. Turgenev expressed a similar viewpoint to Countess Lambert in 1861: "Essentially, because life is an illness, everything that we call philosophy, science, morality, art, poetry, etc. etc., is nothing but soothing medicine, des calmants ou des pallatifs [sedatives or pallatives]." ¹⁰⁹ For Schopenhauer, art offered a deep insight into the purport of the will and human life. Painting, he felt, betrayed the secrets of life and death. It could best illustrate man's will, submissive and contrite, devoid of all desire, empty and tranquil before the cosmic will. Turgenev was a fine collector and critic of painting. During a visit with the Russian writer in Paris, Henry James noted the remarkable landscape by Théodore Rousseau hanging on one of the walls in the salon. Perhaps its message of resignation to the laws of nature may help to explain the significance of Turgenev's portrait of Madame Eltzov in Faust for both Vera and Pavel whose lives become entangled by poetry. Schopenhauer also believed that poetry revealed the tragedy of life. It portended man's inability to exercise his natural will without inflicting sorrow upon other people. His being was united to theirs through the medium of the universal will. Misery thus foredoomed all man's actions and desires. Turgenev mentioned his vulnerability to poetry in a letter sent to Maria Miliutin in 1875. ¹¹⁰ He impressively used poetry in Faust and in Clara Milich to portend man's tragic

¹⁰⁹Turgenev's Letters, p. 123.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 274.

existence in the world. Schopenhauer turned to music as the greatest expression of the will reverberating through the universe; it embodied joy and sorrow, love and hate. Turgenev himself was very susceptible to music, which roused his imagination and introduced him to mysterious perspectives.¹¹¹ He especially enjoyed listening to Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Gounod, Tchaikovsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov. Those irrational qualities of music may explain the recurrence of songs, melodies, and chords resounding in Turgenev's ghostly tales. Art thus helped the German thinker and the Russian writer to penetrate the banal surface of life and detect the underlying tragedy destined for man.

To add some new points to the discussion about Turgenev's pessimistic mood, the reader may turn to the American novelist, Henry James, who also wrote ghostly tales or, as he preferred to call them, fairy tales. Younger by twenty-five years and living in distant America, Henry James nevertheless, felt a certain kinship with the Russian writer. Since childhood, James had similarly become aware of that invisible, undefinable, fearful force pulsating throughout the universe. Day-nightmares which frequented members of the Jamesian family increased his anxiety over the mysteriousness of life. Like Turgenev, he hoped to understand reality by impartially analyzing all its aspects. The mingling of the irrational in the rational intrigued James. He too regarded dreams, apparitions, and visions as natural aids in exploring the supernatural phenomena of life. He admired Turgenev who avoided all appeal to the horrific or the beatific per se. The Russian writer connected supernatural occurrences with ordinary, everyday people and thus achieved a more convincing climax and a more

¹¹¹Turgenev's Letters, p. 134.

imaginative impact than, for instance, Edgar Allan Poe. Yet James admitted that certain secrets resisted temporal revelation and that absolute knowledge remained beyond the grasp of man. Seeming to share Turgenev's positivistic views, he accepted the inexplicability of life and only attempted to answer the greatest number of questions with the greatest conveyance of truth.

In a critical essay on the Russian writer published in April, 1874, in the North American Review, James discussed Turgenev's strong and weak points. On the affirmative side he placed Turgenev's delicate portrayal of the human psyche and its relationship with the current of life. While the American tended to be more interested in psychology and the Russian in poetry, the latter remarked that "a poet must be a psychologist--but a secret one; he must know and feel the roots of phenomena, but only present the phenomena themselves--in bloom or in decline. . . ."112 Turgenev looked deeply into man's innermost world, though often applying his eye to "very dusky apertures," and thoroughly explored the character of the inexplicable, irresponsible human specimen. Impartially observing the struggle between soul and sense, he showed man's weakness before the spectrums of life and concluded his short stories, according to James, ". . . with the moral that salvation lies in being able, at a given moment, to turn on one's will like a screw."113 But Turgenev never reproached anyone for attempting to resist the decrees of fate because "he has an eye for all our passions, and a deeply sympathetic sense of the wonderful complexity of our souls."114 That compassion for humanity greatly impressed James

112 Turgenev's Letters, p. 111.

113 James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 241.

114 Ibid., p. 217.

who also sensed ". . . that man, brave though he is on earth and in space, can still be frightened by his own dreams."¹¹⁵

On the affirmative side, James also placed Turgenev's interpretation of realism so unlike that of their contemporaries. In the Russian's pages, life ". . . is very far from meaning a dreary liability to sordid accidents, as it seems to mean with those writers of the grimly pathetic school who cultivate sympathy to the detriment of comprehension."¹¹⁶ Turgenev ". . . does equal justice--joyous justice--to all brighter accidents--to everything in experience that helps to keep it within the pale of legend."¹¹⁷ James did not feel that Turgenev was interested in creating a story for the sake of a story; he wished instead to accumulate more information about the human mind. James considered Turgenev a very careful writer who

. . . has not the faculty of rapid, passionate, almost reckless improvisation--that of Walter Scott, of Dickens, of George Sand. This is an immense charm in a story-teller; on the whole, to our sense the greatest. Turgénieff lacks it; he charms us in other ways. To describe him in the fewest terms, he is a story-teller who has taken notes. This must have been a life-long habit. His tales are a magazine of small facts, of anecdotes, of descriptive traits, taken, as the phrase is, from the life.¹¹⁸

However, Turgenev, unlike the majority of his contemporaries, maintained a non-committal attitude towards his concise studies and, thus, kept the contradictions of life in perspective.

The American author further praised the Russian writer's poetic inclinations, which helped him to blend the imaginary with the real in an attempt to find the truth. James rightly noted that "there is an

¹¹⁵Henry James, "Introduction," Ghostly Tales of Henry James, ed. by Leon Edel (New York, 1963), p. viii.

¹¹⁶James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 222.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 222.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 212.

even greater reality because it is touched with the fantastic, . . ."¹¹⁹

Thinking of the ghostly tales, Three Meetings, Phantoms, The Dog, and episodes from A Sportsman's Sketches, James commented:

Imagination guides his hand and moderates his touch, and makes the artist worthy of the observer. In a word, he is universally sensitive. In susceptibility to the sensuous impressions of life--to colours and odours and forms, and the myriad ineffable refinements and enticements of beauty--he equals, and even surpasses the most accomplished representatives of the French school of story-telling; and yet he has, on the other hand, an apprehension of man's religious impulses, of the ascetic passion, the capacity of becoming dead to colours and odours and beauty, never dreamed of in the philosophy of Balzac and Flaubert, Octave Feuillet and Gustave Droz.¹²⁰

That perceptive quality which James observed in Turgenev may help to explain the Russian writer's attraction for Schopenhauer, who was also universally sensitive.

After considering the Russian writer's affirmative points, James turned to the negative. In his viewpoint, Turgenev tended to dwell far too long on ". . . the dusky pall of fatality, . . . suspended over all human things, . . ."¹²¹ Disappointment and despair, desperate adventures and disasters continually defeated Turgenev's people. Their will repeatedly collapsed and they always submitted to the laws of fate. The agents of evil seemed strangely natural and even captivated the reader with their deceptive charms. The moral of Turgenev's stories, James declared, ". . . as we are free to gather it, is that there is no effective plotting for happiness, . . ."¹²² He concluded by saying, ". . . with all the charity in the world, it is impossible to pronounce M. Turgénieff anything better than a pessimist."¹²³

¹¹⁹James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 215.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 219.

¹²²Ibid., p. 229.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 247.

¹²³Ibid., p. 247.

Turgenev acknowledged the American author's words with the comment:

I have only to observe, that the pessimism you reproach me--is perhaps --is certainly an involuntary one.--My "excess of irony," as you call it--does not give me any pleasure--not even the bitter one, of which some people speak.¹²⁴

But his pessimism in its early stages did not reach the depths of Schopenhauer's. A letter written to Minitski in 1853 contains that suggestion which also invalidates James' reproach. Turgenev advised:

Maintain the noble resolution that your words now breathe, and learn that without faith, without a profound and powerful faith, life is not worth living and becomes nasty. Mind you, this is said to you by a man who may be thought permeated with irony and criticizing; but without ardent love and faith, irony is trash and criticism is worse than swearing. If we examine the poetry of evil, incarnated in the character of Satan, we find that even that poetry is based on infinite love¹²⁵

He concluded his letter with the assertion: "In any case, our calling is not to be devils--let us be people--and we shall try to be people as long as we can, and 'walk with God on the hard road.'"¹²⁶ Turgenev, especially towards the end of his life, continued to hope for the Good and the Beautiful despite life's indications to the contrary. His words concerning the death of Stankevich may be applied to his feeling in Clara Milich: "The hand of God never ceases to sow embryos of great aspirations in the soul. Sooner or later light will conquer darkness."¹²⁷

However Turgenev never expressed his optimism as openly as James, who, according to the Russian writer, also possessed a certain bent for sadness.¹²⁸ The American author remarked that Turgenev's tales

. . . all seem to us to be gloomier by several shades than they need

¹²⁴Turgenev's Letters, p. 266.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 54.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 12.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 302.

have been; for we hold to the good old belief that the presumption, in life, is in favour of the brighter side, and we deem it, in art, an indispensable condition of our interest in a depressed observer that he should have at least tried his best to be cheerful.¹²⁹

James more readily idealized his experiences and rejected Turgenev's "fatal fact." To the futility of life, James opposed the claims of the imagination which consistently indicate the existence of a faint, unknown strand keeping the world together and without which there would be a great void. Turgenev concealed his idealism behind his unhappy yet accurate pictures of reality and characteristically closed his supernatural stories with an unanswered question. James himself recognized that one reading of Turgenev's tales was not enough for at first the reader is too concerned with the character. Only later, after much meditation does he prize the strand of ideal beauty threading its way through the entrancing reality. Then, in James' opinion, the reader becomes aware of the Russian writer's ". . . deeply intellectual impulse to universal appreciation."¹³⁰

To conclude his critical essay, James offered within the context of his own idealism a perceptive analysis of Turgenev. He felt that no other romancer had created as many living people as Turgenev nor had mingled as much ideal beauty with bare reality. James believed that the Russian's melancholy had its element of error but also had its greater element of wisdom since life is a struggle, a point upon which both optimists and pessimists agree. From between Turgenev's lines, James deciphered that

. . . the world as it stands is no illusion, no phantasm, no evil dream of a night; we wake up to it for ever and ever; we can neither forget it nor deny it nor dispense with it. We can welcome experience as it comes, and give it what it demands, in exchange for something which it

¹²⁹James, French Poets and Novelists, p. 249.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 216.

is idle to pause to cause much or little so long as it swells the volume of consciousness. In this there is mingled pain and delight, but over the mysterious mixture there hovers a visible rule, that bids us to learn to will and seek to understand.¹³¹

Despite Turgenev's tendency towards irony, he was in James' opinion

". . . a very welcome mediator between the world and our curiosity."¹³²

Turgenev, however, resists such appellations as pessimist or optimist. His positivistic outlook permits him to be whatever his readers wish him to be. Yet the doubts he expressed in the 1840's, the despondency in the 1850's, and the fascination for Schopenhauer in the 1860's suggest a negative viewpoint which lingered till his dying day. To Flaubert in 1872, Turgenev decried the "taedium vitae" [tedium of life], the oppressive melancholy and repulsion of human activity.¹³³ In 1875, he assured his correspondent, A. V. Toporov that ". . . life in general is not a happy business--that question was decided long ago."¹³⁴ And to his brother, Nikolai Sergeevich, Turgenev confided that ". . . life ahead seems rather empty--but the devil (or, if you like, the truth) must, as they say, be looked in the eye."¹³⁵

Turgenev never claimed to solve the enigma of life. He wrote to narrate, not to prove.¹³⁶ Consequently, neither his pessimistic nor op-

¹³¹James, French Poets and Novelists, pp. 250-51.

¹³²Ibid., p. 251.

¹³³Turgenev's Letters, p. 251.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 272.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 307.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 302.

timistic exclamations should be overemphasized in determining his attitude towards reality. The door of revelation never opened more than a crack for him and he never entered the Nirvana of Schopenhauer nor the transcendental goodness of James. In attempting to cross its threshold, Turgenev caught more glimpses of the irrational in order to help put the puzzle of life together.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The experience of "living death" pushed Turgenev, whom Pauline Viardot called "le plus triste des hommes," deep into the realms of the supernatural where he sought an answer to the enigma of life. His positivistic outlook prepared him to accept the cosmic rule of either the divine power of beauty and justice or the demonic power of ugliness and iniquity. But Turgenev discovered that the truth slipped from his grasp like a lizard. The elusive mystery surrounding man's destiny increasingly perplexed Turgenev and contributed to those feelings of discomfiture, anxiety, and insecurity, which he poignantly expressed in Enough.

Turgenev became conscious of the duality of reality at an early age. He absorbed from family and friend vague apprehensions of a potentially malevolent force permeating the world and interfering with human activity. That predilection for the irrational phenomenon later influenced his explorations of the rational. Often calling himself a realist, Turgenev believed that he must impartially investigate both sides of life in order to present an accurate picture of man in his surroundings. However, unlike his predecessor, Gogol, or his contemporaries, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev did not seek a solution for man's predicament in mystical doctrines, which only biased their pursuit of transcendental truth.

Yet, Turgenev's own experiences with unhappiness perhaps hampered his freedom of outlook. He frequently implied in his correspondence and

in his ghostly tales that life was a tragic affair. The threat of death, Turgenev asserted in Enough, discouraged man from aspiring towards happiness and creativity. It reduced man's life to nothingness. Sharing views similar to those of Schopenhauer, Turgenev considered temporal misery the result of the conflict between the individual will and the cosmic will. The more one willed, the more one suffered. Temporary relief from suffering, Turgenev wrote in Faust, rested in the renunciation of all one's dreams and desires. However, Turgenev never reached the depths of Schopenhauer's bitterness and pessimism. He did not entirely believe that the hidden force determining man's destiny projected absolute evilness. Nor did he find refuge from the misery and the conflicts of life in Eastern mysticism. Turgenev's positivistic attitude gave him the mobility to study reality objectively.

Yet, positivism in its final stages of development portends idealism. Comte himself implied that the general law for human thought progresses in the direction of those religious concepts which dominated man's ancient history. Though Turgenev had agnostic tendencies, his last supernatural story, Clara Milich, contrasts with those written earlier because it suggests Turgenev's evolution towards optimism or idealism.

In each of his ghostly tales, Turgenev gazed at death, either physical or psychical, and earnestly hoped that the human spirit would eventually shed light on the dark void after death. Like other mortals, Turgenev sought assurance that man would be spared death's sting. He narrated stories about those who never die--for example, the person possessing the elixir of life such as the Malayan in The Song of Triumphant Love; the spirit haunting the visible world such as Ellis in Phantoms and Clara in Clara Milich; the soul transformed into another body such as the

devilish beasts in The Dog and the nocturnal father in The Dream. Hoping that man faced immortality rather than annihilation, Turgenev, restrained by his positivistic outlook, could go no further than depicting man " . . . in his natural attitude, with feet chained to the earth, but looking longingly upwards into the sky."¹³⁷

Though Turgenev repeatedly stressed his indifference to mysticism, his ghostly tales indicate a preoccupation with its elements. He felt that life could not be explained simply through reason or religion. The positivistic method enabled him to impartially examine the realms of the supernatural and, perhaps, move closer to the truth about life. Turgenev's compassion, tenderness, and sincerity, sometimes concealed behind wit and pointed irony, roused the feelings of universal love and humanitarianism in him, feelings which are also part of the mystical doctrine, and those sentiments were too strong in Turgenev to permit him to be a bona fide pessimist. His poetic inclinations further linked him with the elements of mysticism because, as Jacomina Korteling would say, " . . . the poets, the artists in general will partake more or less of the nature of mystics."¹³⁸ E. J. Watkin, for instance, commented that both share the powers of imagination and inspiration, the perceptions of beauty and emotion, which lead to the revelation of eternal truth. "The poet," he observed, "whether he writes in verse or prose, provides the symbols which suggest the Indescribable Reality the mystic knows."¹³⁹ Also, the idealism of certain

¹³⁷ Vogüé, The Russian Novel, p. 169.

¹³⁸ Jacomina Korteling, "General Introduction," Mysticism in Blake and Wordsworth (New York, 1966), p. 4.

¹³⁹ E. J. Watkin, Poets and Mystics (London and New York, 1953), p. 19.

philosophers, whom Turgenev studied, could not have failed to touch him with their mystical content. Spinoza first formulated the theory of scientifically relating the universe to the mystical quest for unity with the Absolute, whatever it may be. Goethe, whom Turgenev prodigiously read, was the first to express that thought in literary form. Soon the Romantic literary vision became distinctly related to the mystical vision. Turgenev also read Hegel, Schelling, and Schopenhauer who have been classed as mystical philosophers. However, at the same time, he recoiled from the apparent one-sidedness of their conceptions. In his poem, Prayer, Turgenev declared that it was impossible for him to pray to the god of Hegel or Kant. He could neither believe nor convince himself that a World Spirit possessed the power to prevent two and two from making four; as a rationalist, he revolted against such an absurdity. The most important question, Turgenev stated, was the question of truth. His quest for truth impressed Tolstoy, in spite of the writers' frequent quarrels with one another. After Turgenev's death, Tolstoy wrote:

. . . Turgenev's impact upon our literature has been very good and fruitful. He lived, he sought, and he expressed in his works, what he found --everything he found. He did not use his talent (his skill at depicting so well) to hide his heart, as has been done and is being done, but to bring all of it out into the open.¹⁴⁰

Tolstoy felt that Turgenev's life and works revealed, despite his positivism, a faith in beauty and an unconscious, unformulated love, which directed him towards absolute idealism.

¹⁴⁰Turgenev's Letters, p. 368.

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